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ANNALI LATERANENSI

PUBBLICAZIONE

DEL PONTIFICIO MUSEO
MISSIONARIO ETNOLOGICO

VOL. XVIII

[Title Page]

1955

CITTÀ DEL VATICANO
TIPOGRAFIA POLIGLOTTA VATICANA

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B. BERNARDI I. M. C.

THE AGE-SYSTEM OF THE MASAI

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I. Introduction and bibliography. – II. Tribal divisions and other social elements of the Masai. – III. Preliminaries to the institution of the age-class. – IV. Individual initiation. – V. The age-units and their mutual relationship. – VI. The final institution of the age-unit. – VII. The internal structure of the age-unit. – VIII. The function of the age-unit. – IX. The ceremonies for the institution of the age-class. – X. The general pattern of the initiation ceremonies. – XI. The prophet and the institution of the age-classes. – XII. The relationship of class-members. – XIII. Conclusions.

I – INTRODUCTION AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

In the October issue, 1952, of *Africa*, the *Journal of the International African Institute*, I published a critical evaluation of the age-system of the Nilo-Hamitic Peoples. That evaluation was based on an analysis of the existing anthropological literature of which the present paper offers the section on the Masai. It will be followed, I hope, by other papers on the other Nilo-Hamites. In the last few years intense fieldresearch has been going on, and new material is being made available. This will make it possible to fill in the gaps and complete the picture of the Nilo-Hamitic age-system. All this analytical work should be preliminary to a deeper study of Nilo-Hamites' social and religious organisation and possibly provide a basis for defining their cultural-historical relation with such other peoples as the Bantu-Hamites of East Africa, the Kikuyu, the Kamba, etc.

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The literature on the Masai is comparatively voluminous, though much of it is irrelevant and unreliable and makes reading confusing and any analytical work complicate. I shall not compile here a full bibliography, but limit my indication to the actual works which deal with the age system and a few others I have used. I wish to thank

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127 my Professor, ISAAK SCHAPERA of the London School of Economics. Through his good offices I was able to see some Manuscripts on the Masai from the Secretariat, Nairobi, as recorded in the following bibliography.

113 ANONYMOUS n. d., *Notes on social organisation etc.*, in *Masai Reserve MS.*, pp. 12, *NAD.* 19. IV, no. 49. Nairobi).

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WEBSTER E. J., *The Borana, Rendille, and Samburu: the Nomadic Tribes of Northern Frontier District*, Nairobi 1944, pp. 11.

WHITEHOUSE L. E., *Masai Social Customs*, in *J. E. A. U. N. H. S.*, 3, 1913, pp. 47-48, pp. 146-153.

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Initial explained:

A. M. N. H. – *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History.*

I. A. I. — *International African Institute.*

J. A. S. — *Journal of the African Society.*

J. E. A. U. N. H. S. — *Journal of the East Africa and Uganda Natural History Society.*

J. R. A. I — *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute.*

K. L. C. E. — *Kenya Land Commission – Evidence.*

NAD — *Native Administration.*

T. N. & R. — *Tanganyika Notes and Records.*

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II – TRIBAL DIVISIONS AND OTHER SOCIAL ELEMENTS OF THE MASAI

101 619 The name Masai covers a group of related tribes in British East Africa. The linguistic classification of BEYAN (see Bibl.) distinguishes five Masai tribes:

1. *The Samburu*, north east of Lake Baringo, in the Rift Valley and Northern Frontier Provinces of Kenya. They are sometimes called Burkeneji, a derivative from *il-loo-iboor-keneji*, the people of the white goats. They are pastoral. We know very little of their social organisation as they have never been studied on the field.

2. *The Njamusi or Njemps.* They live close to Lake Baringo, and are mainly agricultural. DUNDAS,[1] states that " they are survivors of a Samburu tribe called Il Digio ". What we know of the Njamusi is practically limited to the fact that they exist.

3. *The Kapiti or Kaputiei.* They live mainly in Kenya around Narok, Ngong and Kajiado. Some are found in Tanganyika. All are pastoral. HOLLIS' standard work on the Masai refers mainly to this tribe.

4. *The Kisongo*, found mainly in Tanganyika around Loliondo and Mondul. There are a few in Kenya. All are pastoral. The other standard work on the Masai by MERKER describes, for the most part, the Kisongo.

5. *The Lumbwa.* The name means " farmers ", and is correctly applied only to the agricultural Masai. It is wrongly used also for the Kipsigis. The Lumbwa are found mainly in Tanganyika near Lake Natron, Lake Manyara, and around Arusha and Mt. Meru. They are called by the other Masai *Il-Oikop*, a name of despisal.[2]

197 According to BEYAN and TUCKER, all these Masai tribes are linguistically distinguished by " very slight dialectal differences ".

[1] DUNDAS, *The Wamanga and other Tribes of the Elgon district, British East Africa* in *J. R. A. I.*, 43, 1913, p. 50.

[2] There are other names which do not indicate any special tribe, such as Il-Arusha, applied to the Masai living in or around Arusha. They are called Wa-Arusha by the neighbouring Bantu. Meru is the name for the Masai living on the slopes of Mt. Meru. They should be distinguished from the A-Meru of Kenya, Central Province. Kwafi is the Swahili term for the Masai, but it is especially applied to the Lumbwa of Kilosa District in Tanganyika. We may add that the Kikuyu and the A-Meru speak of the Masai (Mathai, Matua, respectively) as Okabi.

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On the whole, those two authorities stress the linguistic unity of all the Masai.

The great majority of the Masai are pastoral, only very few tribes having taken to agriculture. The pastoral tribes follow a semi-nomadic way of life. "They move", writes Lord HAILEY,[3] "with their herds in order to avail themselves of the seasonal variations in water supplies, so that in effect they practise a system of rotational grazing". The same writer,[4] reports "a recent estimate" of Masai herds in Kenya which puts "the number of cattle at over 700,000, with 800,000 sheep and a large number of donkeys". For Tanganyika he gives no figure. The above estimates show clearly enough how the attitude of the Masai to cattle is a paramount feature of their life. To own cattle is a privilege obtained through initiation, and large herds are a sign of outstanding social status. Cattle are the main economic interest and investment for the Masai.[5]

The total population of all the Masai may be reckoned at about 122,792. The 1948 census of Kenya's population (see Bibl.) gives for the Samburu an estimate of 20,000, and the following figures: Njemps 3,423, the other Masai 67,201. In 1931 the Tanganyika Masai were reckoned as 32, 168.

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Under the present political situation, the Masai are not administered as a single unit, for they are divided into two sections by the border of Tanganyika Territory and Kenya Colony.

In Tanganyika the Masai form one of the four districts of the Territory's Northern Province (the Masai District). In Kenya the main group inhabits the reserve adjoining Tanganyika Masai District, and constitutes the Extra Provincial District (Masai District) of the Colony. The other group (Samburu and Njamusi) is incorporated with the Rift Valley Province (Samburu and Baringo District), and partly with the Northern Frontier Province. The geographical separation of the Samburu from the other Masai is the reason why the Samburu were considered, and are still considered, as a non-Masai tribe. But, as BRYAN remarks, they are true Masai. The splitting of Masailand and the separation of the Masai were made

[3] HAILEY, *Native Administration in the British African Territories, Part I*, London 1950, p. 281.

[4] *L. c.*, p. 167.

[5] In this connection see the article of L. JAMES, in *Africa*, 12, pp. 49 ss.

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permanent by the present administrative arrangement, but were not established by it. The land which divides the Samburu in the north from the Kapiti in the south of Kenya, was once the home of the Laikipiak and the Uasin Gishu Masai. In those days, Masailand was a continuous strip of land stretching over the plains south of Mt. Kilimanjaro and Mt. Meru up to the shores of Lake Rudolph. At the end of 19th century a great cattle plague and, even more, civil wars (the Kapiti versus the Laikipiak and Uasin Gishu) wrought havoc among the latter, who were almost destroyed. The few remnants have been absorbed by other Masai tribes, especially the Kapiti and the Kisongo. The Laikipiak plains west of Nanyuki which in 1904 had first been set aside as a special reserve (the Northern Masai reserve), were subsequently declared open to European settlement, and by 1911 Agreement the Southern Masai Reserve was enlarged into what is now the Extra Provincial District of the Masai in Kenya Colony. [1]

* * *

A comparative analysis of the literature shows the existence of three graded territorial units, the major and the minor territorial sections, and the village. A character common to the first two sections is the absence of a clear limit or boundary. The sections are spoken of in terms of watering and grazing rights. The nomadic aspect of Masai life is chiefly responsible for this territorial vagueness. The absence of any centralised authority to check people and cattle's transhumance is another important cause of the vagueness of Masai territorial organisation.

The major territorial section is made up by the area in which the movements of a full tribe usually take place. The existence of

[1] SANDFORD, *An Administrative and Political History of the Masai Reserve*. London 1919, Appendix; *K. L. C. E.*, p. 188. One may note that the Uasin Gishu and the Laikipiak, together with the Siria and the Lumbwa were despised as inferior, for they were not considered as "pure Masai" by the other tribes who regarded themselves as descendants of Masainda. See FOSBROOKE, p. 7. This ill-feeling may explain in part, the fury with which the Kapiti fought against the Laikipiak and the Uasin Gishu.

In December 1950. I visited the Ndigirri Dorobo at Dol Dol on the Mukogodo Hills, some 50 miles north west of Nanyuki. They claim to have been dependent on the Laikipiak Masai, and they survived the slaughter thanks to their seclusion in the forests. Their present outlook seems to be entirely Masai. The names of their age-classes are consonant with those of the Masai.

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these sections is evidenced at a superficial level by the adoption of a common tribal name. But members of a major section are more closely bound by their social, ceremonial and military relationships based on their common age-system. FOSBROOKE, [7] who did not consider the major territorial section as a unit of Masai territorial organisation, tries to explain as follows the Kisongo major section: "the majority of the Masai in Tanganyika regard themselves as Kissongo, but Kissongo is a very difficult term to define, for it is neither a sub-tribe, nor yet, strictly speaking, a section. The nearest definition is probably "that group of sections which follows the Mondul laibon". [8] See: below *laibon's* relationship to Masai social organisation. The early fieldresearchers, MERKER and HOLLIS, recorded the major territorial sections which they calle 'Provinzen' and 'Districts', respectively. MERKER, [9] gave their number as three: Kisongo, Loita and Ol Bruggo. HOLLIS, [10] counted five: Kaputiei (Kapite plains) En aiposha (Naivasha), Kisongo (south and West Kilimanjaro), Uasin Gishu and 'L-Aikipiak. He noted that the last two had practically ceased to exist. The point is also confirmed by S. L. HINDE. [11] The term *en-gop*, pl. *in-gwapi*, which HOLLIS translates as "the land, the country", seems to apply to these major sections. Their number corresponds, at present, to the linguistic groups we have reported.

The minor territorial section has been made the subject of special analysis by FOSBROOKE. He defines it as "a territorial unit of the Masai, the members of which regard themselves as owners of the waters and grazing grounds, to the exlusion of other sections. Such a unit is called *ol osho*, pl. *il oishon*. Alone or in groups the sections function as units in war, in allegiance to a particular *laibon*, and in performance of certain tribal ceremonies; in general they possess a sense of solidarity which expresses itself in regarding members of other sections to a certain extent as strangers". [12]

The absence of definite geographical limits and the stress on water and grazing rights have been noted. The *laibon's*, or prophet,

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[7] FOSBROOKE, *An Administrative Survey of the Masai Social System*, in *T. N. and R.*, 1948, p. 9.

[8] See below *laibon's* relationship to Masai social organisation.

[9] MERKER, *Die Masai: ethnographische Monographie eines ostafrikanischen Semitenvolkes*, Berlin 1904, p. 8.

[10] HOLLIS, *The Masai*, Oxford 905, pp. 260, 290.

[11] HINDE, *The Last of the Masai*, London 1901, pp. 91, 97.

[12] FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, pp. 7 ss.

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634 791 position in connection with the nature of the major and minor territorial sections is questionable. FOSBROOKE has put into evidence the marginal significance of the *laibon* for Masai social organisation. He has also shown how wrong it is to ascribe to the prophet's institution a political function. The prophet can only obtain a personal political influence which is his, and not of his office. Now, to describe the *laibon's* institution as the point of allegiance of territorial sections' members is tantamount to making the prophet a central political authority which he is certainly not. The important point in the nature of the territorial sections is members' consciousness of their strength and sufficiency as to be entitled to keep tribal ceremonies of their own.[13] In studying the Laitayok minor section FOSBROOKE brings that home: "in some areas they (the Laitayok) have been absorbed by the section amongst whom they resided, and thus eventually they came to be regarded as a clan; in other areas they were sufficiently numerous to enable them to retain their own grazing grounds, and to justify their holding tribal ceremonies of their own". FOSBROOKE insists on the fortuitous origin of the territorial minor sections. The point becomes obvious if the nomadism of the Masai and the absence of any centralised authority are kept in mind. People remain in a definite place only for as long as [221] they find good grazing and water for their cattle, but they move as soon as these fail, thus breaking up their territorial allegiance.

634 101 619 The following is a tentative list of minor territorial sections deducted from the literature:

SAMBURU.	1. Pusigishu	4. L'Orogishu	7. Longeli
	2. Masola	5. Doiju	8. Nyabarei
	3. Lukumai	6. Mwesi	9. Loimusi

NJAMUSI. According to DUNDAS,[14] there are only two villages: Njemps Kubwa or Njemps Liabori – down stream; and Njemps Ndogo or Njemps Lekepir – up stream.

KAPITI.	1. Kaputiei or Kapiti	3. Ladokilarsi	6. Purko
		4. Kakonyuke	7. Loita
	2. Damat	5. Dalalakotok	8. Matapatu

[13] One should note here that tribal ceremonies are ceremonies connected with the institution of age-sets, a fact wich sheds light on the integrating power of the age-system. See BERNARDI, *The age-system of the Nilo-Hamitic Peoples*, in *Africa*, 22, 1952, pp. 316 ss.

[14] DUNDAS, *Notes on the Tribes inhabitating the Baringo district*, in *J. R. A. I.*, 1910, p. 49.

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KISONGO.	1. Kisongo	2. Sigirari	5. Salei or Saleh
	a. Kiteto	3. Laitokitok	6. Laitayok
	b. Moiba	4. Siria	
LUMBWA.	1. Nguruman	2. Serenget	3. Engaruka

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The villages, *eng ang*, pl. *ing angite*, is the minimal territorial unit. Villages are distributed within the minor sections. JOHNSTON,[15] had already noted that "they generally range within certain districts". A village is the residence of one or more elders with his or their wives and cattle. A man after his marriage does not live in the same village as his father, unless the latter has become senile and unable to cater for himself.

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The internal structure of the village is based on the gatesystem. This consists in a proper arrangement of the house on the sides of the village's gates. The village consists of a large yard enclosed by a thorny fence with gates opening at opposite sides. The house are built on the right and left sides of each gate, every gate with its houses belonging to a single elder. The usual arrangement is as follows: the first house on the gate's right is the dwelling of the owner's first wife; the first house on the left side is that of his second wife; the second house on the right side is that of his third wife; and the same alternating order is followed if marries more wives. The central yard is reserved for cattle. The elder's cattle are allotted to each of his wives according to her rank in the house. Cattle in possession of one side of the gate cannot be inherited by the other side. When inheritance takes place it is with great care that one tries to avoid cattle interchange.[16] The gate system, observes FOSBROOKE,[17] is an ideal, and "a symmetrically arranged gate is seldom found in practice". When people move in search of better grassland, the village is not destroyed, but simply evacuated. During the owner's absence the houses may be occupied by other temporary tenants. At the reverse migration the owner comes back to his old village if this is not irreparably decayed, and it is agreed by custom that any foreigner who might have found shelter in the house must vacate the place to the original owner.

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Another type of Masai village should be mentioned here. It is

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[15] JOHNSTON, *The Uganda Protectorate*, London 1904, p. 810.
[16] See especially MERKER, *l. c.*, pp. 27 s.
[17] FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, p. 44.

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621 the temporary residence of unmarried initiates or "warriors", called *ol manyatta*, pl. *i manyat*. According to MERKER,[18] "in every [634] section there is at least one warrior's village which gathers all the [561] warriors of the section". This type of village is closely related to the age-system institution. Therefore it is not a distinct territorial unit, though it shows the inter-relationship of the age-system and territorial organisation for its tenants are gathered from different villages. Indeed this is a further instance of the age-system's integrating power.[19]

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614 Masai society is divided into t[illegible]eties, *en daloshi*, pl. *in daloishin*, which seem to provide a basis for clan organisation. Every Masai is found in either of the two moieties. These are named after cattle, one: *orok kiteng* — the black cattle, the other: *oodo mongi* — the red bulls. No exogamic restriction is attached to the moieties, 701 but, they seem to have an influence on military organisation. "Whe- 614 never", writes HOLLIS,[20] "the representatives of the clans take part in a raid", they are organised according to their moiety, and the loot is divided "into two parts, one part for each of these main groups".[21] MERKER, states that the words *orok kiteng* and *oodo mongi* are war-cries shouted by warriors according to their moiety. FOSBROOKE,[22] writes that the *orok kiteng* "are regarded as the right hand of the tribe", and the *oodo mongi* as the "left hand". He adds also that this dual division is typical of the "true Masai".

614 At the present there is no apparent relationship between the 634 moiety and the territorial system, but a few indications suggest that such a relationship existed in the past. Thus, in Laitokitok section, according to FOX[23] there is an equal number of "black

[18] MERKER, *l. c.*, p. 82.

[19] BERNARDI, *l. c.*, p. 225.

[20] HOLLIS, *l. c.*, p. 260.

[21] See also MERKER, *l. c.*, p. 97; FOX, *Further notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony*, in *J. R. A. I.*, 60, 1930, p. 457; HOBLEY, *Ethnology of A-Kamba and other East African tribes*, Cambridge 1910, p. 121, who states that the moiety divisions were followed for cattle-breeding purposes. Among the Turkana, the moieties or alternations were distinguished by different war songs or cries and tactical movements. See EMLEY, *The Turkana of Kolosia District*, in *J. R. A. I.*, 43, 1927, pp. 185 s.

[22] FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, p. 48.

[23] FOX, *l. c.*, p. 457.

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cattle" and "red bulls". HOLLIS,[34] recorded two subdivisions of the Uasin Gishu, "the black striped cattle", and "the red striped cattle", which were, very probably, no other thing than the moieties.

The Masai *clans*, *ol gilata*, pl. *il gilata* or *en gishomi*, pl. *in gishomi*, are patrilineal and exogamous. Generally, they do not seem to be totemic. However, HOBLEY,[35] and the author of *MS.* No. 48 have recorded the names of a few clan totem. FOX,[36] refers also to the association of snakes with some clans.

The true exogamic unit of the Masai seems to be any individed unit, either clan or branch of the clan. A Masai may be adopted into another clan then his original one. The same provision applies even to an alien (Kikuyu, Dorobo). The adoptee, however, never attains the same social status as a full member of the clan. He is free to leave at any time, provided he returns whatever he was presented by his patrons, such as cattle or any other valuable.

The relationship between clans and their territorial distribution is not very clear. Analysis would suggest that in the past, clans were territorially separated. At present, there is still a tendency for members of the same clan to live close by to one another and occupy neighbouring encampments. Some sections are almost made up by members of a single clan. Thus, the *Molelian* clan is predominant in Kapiti section; the *Ataysk* clan is predominant in Dalalakotok section. Such facts, however, seem to be the exception. Usually clans are represented at a time in many different sections "There is no rule", writes HOBLEY,[37] "governing the distribution of the various *gilat* (clans); often members of as many as three *gilat* will be found in one *morn engang* (elders' village) or a *morun manyat* (warriors' village)".

Water and cattle are generally clan possession. When new water sources are discovered, they are claimed on behalf of the clan. All clan members who live in the neighbourhood are entitled to make use of them. A foreigner may also be allowed to water his cattle there. If disputes arise, they are settled by the council of clan-members on the spot. As a matter of fact, these water sources are the centre of ordinary social life, as FOSBROOKE[38] writes: "The

[34] HOLLIS, *l. c.*, p. 436.
[35] HOBLEY, *l. c.*, p. 128.
[36] FOX, *l. c.*, p. 436.
[37] HOBLEY, *Eastern Uganda. An ethnological Survey*, London 1902, p. 122.
[38] FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, p. 43.

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614 623 312 423 clansmen frequently meet on the water, and other matters — marriage, debts, etc. — come up for settlement before the tribunal". Clan ownership does not exclude individual ownership, which is integrated by the former as a sort of higher supervision. The point is that no clan property must be passed over to other clans without the owning clan's approval. HOBLEY,[29] states that cattle used to be marked by a clan brand showing clan-possession, and sometimes by a brand of the individual owner.

614 671 683 The corporate bond arising from clan relationship is confirmed by cases of murder compensation. Even if a murderer is a wealthy man, and might pay all the compensation out of his own stock, "the other branches of the clan would still contribute and they would pay their share". However, "if a Masai kills a member of his own branch of the *gilat* he pays compensation himself, and the other branches do not contribute".[30] LEAKEY, on the other hand, was told by his informants that no compensation is expected when a man kills a member of his own branch. They say: "what would be the use of taking a fine from one's own sub-clan?"[31] HOBLEY reports further that "each branch of the *gilat* to whom the murdered man belongs, receives a share of the compensation: 2-3rds to the murdered's father", and the rest is distributed among the other elders of the clan.[32] This is also confirmed by the notes of MAGUIRE on the penal code of the Masai.[33]

614 One should note that the corporate bond formed by clan relationship is of a particularist nature. It ties members to their own clan in opposition to other clans within the same tribe.

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648 642 175 The many efforts of the Administration to identify a native political institution for local government make a very interesting piece of etnographical history. First in Kenya, and also, after 1918, in Tanganyika, one laibon was recognized as the Paramount Chief of the Masai. In Kenya such an office was abolished in 1918, while a graded system of councils was introduced: a Central Masai Council, 14 Native Councils and local Headmen. They acted as tribunals,

[29] HOBLEY, *Ethnology of A-Kamba*, p. 139.
[30] HOBLEY, l. c., p. 139; FOSBROOKE, l. c., pp. 43 s.
[31] LEAKEY, *Some Notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony*, in *J. R. A. I.*, 66, 1936, p. 368.
[32] HOBLEY, l. c.
[33] MAGUIRE, *The Masai Penal Code*, in *J. A. S.*, 33, 1933, pp. 13 ss.

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the Central Council being the Appeal Court. In the thirties, the system was again modified, and there are now two regularly constituted tribunals in each of the two Kenya Districts, Narok and Kajiado, in the Masai reserve, and an Appeal Tribunal in each district. It Tanganyika changes came later. Only in 1938 the Paramount Chief was abolished and a new system introduced. There is now a Masai Council, acting as the Appeal Court from the six Local Courts established under the authority of a Headman. Lord HAILEY, commenting on the Tanganyika system, remarks that "the whole of the juridical organisation seems on a tentative basis, and in practice it functions irregularly, owing to the nomadic habits of the people". This is more or less true also for Kenya. It is a fact that, in Kenya and Tanganyika, the Masai never accepted the authority of the *laibon* or prophet in terms of Paramount Chief, and that they dislike the idea of a formally established court. [*] Nomadism, as Lord HAILEY points out, has much to do with this attitude of the Masai, but it is their social structure which has no place for such institutions. Whatever political authority exists among the Masai, it is established on the structural basis of the age-system. This system has a dynamic character which can hardly be reconciled with the rigidity of any administrative system imposed from above by the Government.

The institution of the Masai prophet has been described by FOURNOOKE, p. 13. He distinguishes three types of *laibon*. "First there is the private practitioner who, for suitable remunerations, will perform such service as curing sickness, removing barrenness and ensuring fidelity in wives. He is only consulted by individual patients. The next stage is when a private practitioner has acquired such a reputation that he is consulted by a deputation on behalf of a group of Masai, and provides charms and lays down a ceremonial to be utilised to the advantage of the whole group. Such prac-

[*] Writing of the Native Authority System in Kenya after 1918, Lord HAILEY says in *Native Administration in the British African Territories*. Part I — *East Africa: Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika*, London 1950, p. 171, "these Tribunal were not generally recognised by the Masai who preferred that such issues as arose between them should be settled in the customary manner by the Headman or Elders". And with regard to the new development he notes, p. 176, that "the preference for referring cases to the arbitration of local headmen or elders persists". He makes a similar comment for Tanganyika on p. 394: "in the Masai District the majority of the issues arising between the tribesmen are settled by arbitration".

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756 tices are alleged to be efficacious for the above-mentioned complaints,
791 and may also prove useful in procuring success in war, adequate rainfall, or immunity from disease, both human and bovine. Such a laibon of course retains his private practice. The final stage is when a laibon is invited to superintend and bless ceremonials affecting the whole tribe, such as circumcision, promotion of warriors, standing down, etc. Such a one retains the duties of the two previous stages, and is in fact the Chief Medicine Man of the section or tribe. This is the status which the term laibon popularly connotes." Therefore, it is clear first that the prophet is essentially a private practitioner, and secondly that his promotion to the higher stages of the practice derive primarily from his personal skill and good luck which give him reputation and, hence, influence on tribal matters. It is significant, however, that the prophet, even when he has reached the highest stage "retains the duties of the two previous stages", in other words, he does not cease to be a private practitioner. Therefore, the title "Chief which Fosbrooke also uses, does not properly describe the prophet's office and makes it Medicine Man", more formal than it really is.[**] It is for the same over-formalisation that our early authorities and the Administration were misled in the evaluation of the prophet institution.[**]

III – PRELIMINARIES TO THE INSTITUTION OF THE AGE-CLASS

561 The age-system of the Masai consists essentially in a structure of age-classes distinguished from one another in terms of seniority. An age-class is instituted as the final result of a long course of initiation ceremonies, performed during an official approved time.

The age-class must be distinguished from other minor groups such as the age-units. These are formed at different stages of the initiation course as intermediate steps to the establishment of the age-class. The age-class follows from the merging and unification of two age-units.

The Masai term for age-class is *olel ajo*, pl. *il ajijik*; for age-unit, *ol porror*, pl. *il porror*.[**] These terms are frequently rendered into

[14]

[*] Indeed Fosbrooke is unable to decide wether the laibon is the chief medicine man of the section or tribe.

[**] See also below, and on the relationship of the prophet-institution to the structure of the age-system as a whole see Bernardi, l. c., pp. 333, 391.

[**] Hollis, l. c., pp. 70 sq.; Hollis, l. c., pp. 338, 341 sq.; Lacey, l. c., pp. 191 sq.; Fox, l. c., p. 448; Fosbrooke, l. c., p. 56.

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English as 'generation' and 'age', respectively. Such a terminology is too vague and of little assistance in shedding light on the matter.

Sometimes the Masai apply these terms alternatively to the class or to the units,[44] but usually *ol oje* stands for the broader and final association i. e., the age-class, and *ol porror* for the temporary association i. e., the age-unit.

Age-class membership is obtained through initiation, and is held for life. The initiation course is opened by some preliminary ceremonies. These must be performed before any individual member may be initiated singly or in a group. Analysis shows that the importance of these ceremonies in connection with the institution of an age-class varies greatly. There are four such ceremonies: 1) *Epoloo e-nito*; 2) *Emboloonia*; 3) *Endungore*; 4) *Eunjikata*.[45]

Epoloo E-Nito, " The passing of the fence ".[46] " A Masai child ", states HOLLIS, " cannot be circumcised until the father has observed a custom called " The passing of the fence ". The ceremony consists in a period of four days segregation. The candidate's father lives in a special hut set apart from the village, where he also takes his food. During this time he wears the clothes, decorations and weapons of a warrior. On the last day he is taken back to the village by some elders. Before he enters the house where the ceremonial wine is kept, he is addressed five times by one of the elders thus: " Go, become an old man ". He refuses saying: " No, I shall not ". At the fifth time, he replies – " Ho, I have gone then ". He then, enters the hut and puts aside the warrior's paraphernalia; the honey wine is drunk; and he is called by his son's name, thus: The father

[44] WESTERMANN, *Masai Social Customs*, in *J. R. A. U. F. H. S.*, 3, 1933, p. 146; FOX, l. c., p. 448.

[45] It is a widely held opinion that the institution of the Masai age-class is based entirely on the circumcision ceremony. Actually it is not uncommon to find the term " circumcision " used as an alternative to age-system and its groups. This opinion is partly justified by the expressions " *oiyiei-kaaji* circumcision ", *enaroto lairua*, and " *oiti-kaaji* circumcision ", *enaroto kedipenge*, applied by the Masai to the first and second age-units, *il porror*, that forms a single age-class, *ol oje*.

It is a fact that circumcision is one of the outstanding ceremonies of the initiation course. However, it should be realized that circumcision is not identical with initiation, and above all that the institution of the age-unit as well as the age-class does not arise impulsively out of circumcision. Therefore the tendency to make everything connected with Masai age-system gravitate towards circumcision is misleading.

[46] HOLLIS, l. c., pp. 304 ss.

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of so-and-so. When he replies to his name, he is told to go and make a profit. He answers: " Herds and flocks ". This is repeated four times, and the ceremony is over ".

The ceremony is performed only once in a man's life, namely when he " wishes to have his eldest child circumcised ". This particular circumstance shows that by " the passing of the fence " a man obtains a special elderly status which gives him a right to have all his children initiated.

Thus, there is a relationship between the father's social status and the initiation into the age-class of his son's. None of these may be initiated unless the father has reached the proper status. The personal status of the father is reflected on his children. Therefore the " passing of the fence " is not in itself part of the age-system initiation, but a condition which must have been observed before a man is allowed to have his sons initiated.

Other authorities (Fox) have stressed the fact that class membership of a Masai is somehow dictated by the class to which his father belongs. " The passing of the fence " gives a special emphasis to this fact and shows how a Masai's initiation into a class is conditioned by the social status of his father. It shows how the structure of Masai society stands on the balance of status of its members. *

" *The tearing of the ox* " (*Embolosat el Kitong*). * Though this ceremony is performed by a single section or a group of sections, its performance has a far reaching value which is accepted throughout Massailand. The ceremony is performed by such sections as the Kakonyuke, the Dalalekutuk and the Purko (all Kayiti). According to Fox the Kisongo also perform it. But this is denied by Fosbrooke, who qualifies Fox's statement by saying that the Kisongo acknowledge and respect the value of the ceremony performed by the Kakonyuke.

As a matter of fact special importance is attached to the ceremony performed by the Kakonyuke, who in any case must be the first to do it and who have the lead in the matter. All the sections which

* The social balance between the father and his son is only an expression of a wider and basic principle, which, in our opinion, is an essential principle of Masai social organization: the principle of the distribution of power. See Bernardi, l. c., pp. 339 ss.

* Fox, *Notes on Marriage Customs among the Masai*, in *J. R. A. U. S. E.*, xli-xli, 1911, pp. 189 s.; Lauret, l. c., p. xxiv; *F.O.*, 1898, p. 8, n. 11; 1897, p. 14, n. 6b; Fosbrooke, l. c., p. 37.

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do not hold their own ceremony come to, or acknowledge, the Kakonyuke ceremony. This is a point to be carefully noted. [581] [561]

Embolosat is preliminary not only to the circumcision ceremony, [534] but also to any other initiation ceremony.

Three different stages make up the whole of the ceremony, namely the election of the master of ceremonies, the contest, and the castration of a bull followed by the naming of the age-unit.

a) The ceremony is organized by the elders. Their first task is to select a youth qualified to be master of the ceremonies (*ol opolos ol Kilong*). They also must obtain his father's consent on payment of some heifers.

The transaction is kept secret because the office is not popular with the youths. The elders' nominee is then seized in order that he may not escape, and told what is in store for him.

Not every boy is eligible for the office, but only a member of the *Loipemei* clan. The *ol opolos* must wear the garments and the ear-ornaments (*rorutpa*) of the elders, whose status he is to be invested with, which seems the reason for the reluctance to accept the office. The status of the *ol opolos* is ceremonial and, according to FOX, he has no function outside the *Embolosat*. [514] [554]

The *ol opolos* has to supply the ceremonial bull, " without blemish, colour black with white breast ", [43] and the ceremony is completed at his village which is enlarged for the occasion. [44]

b) The day of the contest is fixed by the elders. In the morning the bull is taken back to the village, while the elders officially introduce the *ol opolos* to the other candidates. These are told to look up to him because he is their *ol opolos*. Then, the elders order the bull into the village and immediately the boys rush in to get hold of it.

Not all the boys enter the competition, only a few from each attending section. [45]

Members of the Kakonyuke section make a point of being victorious. The contest is stopped by the elders as soon as victory is [634]

[43] In the *Annual Report, NAD*, 1938, p. 9, s. 11, we are told that the " black ox is fed one day on milk and native beer, not being allowed to eat grass ".

[44] According to LEAKEY a special new village is built.

[45] LEAKEY writes that " only three candidates for initiation whose fathers took part in a born-raising ceremony are allowed to take part; the rest of the candidates cannot do so, but stay at their homes while the ceremony takes place ".

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88 56 in sight. Victory consists in getting a hold of the bullock by its right horn and maintaining the grip.

c) After the contest the bull is smothered, and skinned; rings are made out of the skin and distributed by the *oi opolos*." "The meat is eaten and the elders go to a place apart to pray to God for the boys. The age is then given a name which is kept until the *E-Unoto* ceremony, which takes place some years later". (Fox).

The bones of the ox are burnt and the fire is guarded to avoid any evil spell being cast on it.

Eventually the boys return to their homes and wait for their turn to be circumcised.

The fact that "only the right hand circumcision", i. e. the first of the two age-units of an age class, performs the ceremony is essential to an analysis of the significance of *Emboloset*." It means that *Emboloset* is the first ceremony of the initiation which institutes the class, and not simply of the initiation which institutes the age-unit. Indeed the left hand circumcision, i. e. the junior age-unit of the class, does not perform *Emboloset*, and therefore the senior age-unit acting at *Emboloset* does it on behalf of the whole class. *Emboloset* should then be regarded as the starting point of a new class, opening the period during which the class is instituted. This specific value of *Emboloset* is confirmed by the acceptance on the part of all the Masai of the Kakonyuke ceremony. We do not know the reason why this ceremony should have such a paramount importance, but its social significance seems to be a thoroughly established fact. LEAKEY states that "only one ox-seizing ceremony (is held) in the whole Masai country, before a new age-group proceeds to initiation and circumcison". This statement is qualified by FOX in the sense that *Emboloset* is also performed by other sections, as we mentioned above, but the Kakonyuke must first perform it. Of the Kisongo FOSBROOKE writes: "the elders are extremely vague as to its (of *Emboloset*) meaning, but that the new age is formally inaugurated by *Emboloset* in Kenya is fully confirmed by the elders round Mondul".

" According to LEAKEY, the *oi opolos* is given a thong made from the skin and he is supposed never to throw it away, an obligation which does not apply to the youths who are given the rings.

" In the chart of Masai "age-grades" arranged by FOSBROOKE, l. c., p. 34, *emboloset* is shown as taking place before the two circumcision periods of the age-units. This does not agree with the evidence offered by FOX. [114]

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The value of the Kakonyuko *Bukolosat* is further ascertained from the analogous value of *Ngakarr* proper of the Kisongo. This is a ceremony perfecting the institution of a class. It is performed by the Kisongo and accepted by all the Masai of Tanganyika and Kenya. *See below.*

The fact that sections other than the Kakonyuko hold their own ceremony may probably be ascribed to the tendency of the section to act as independent group. Their performance, at any rate, has only a limited local value.

Budungaru – Eupikata. [1] It appears that these two ceremonies, *Budungaru* and *Eupikata* are closely connected, if not actually one single ceremony. [2] The aim of *Budungaru-Eupikata* is to define the period for the institution of the age-units and start the initiation course related to such institution. The ceremony is performed by "the right hand and the left hand" age units, i. e. before the institution of each of the two units (WHITEHOUSE, MERKER, FOX-BROOKE).

Some of our authorities stress the fact that the first step towards initiation must be taken by the boys. This is true, but the decision to hold the ceremony rests entirely with the elders, and the aim of the candidates' action on the elders is merely to convince that the time is ripe for the decision.

The elders contacted by the boys are members of the class next but one above the class which is to be formed by the candidates. [3]

It is not the leading elders that the candidates contact first, but others, whose duty, apparently, is to instruct them on the right way and method of approaching the leaders of the elders' class.

Those who are to see the elders are selected with care. They "must be pure bred Masai and must have some knowledge of ceremonial routine" (DAWSON).

It is relevant to note these details. They show how the prospec-

[1] MERKER, l. c., p. 61; RAGOZ, *The circumcision ceremony among the Kwavi Masai*, in *J. R. A. I.*, 34, 1904, p. 186; HOLLIS, l. c., p. 296; LEAKEY, 187 m.; FOX, *Further Notes on the Masai of Kenia Colony*, in *J. R. A. I.*, 15, 1886, pp. 448 m.; WHITEHOUSE, l. c., pp. 146 m.; DAWSON, *Notes on (a) Eupepsie ceremony, (b) milk drinking ceremony, (c) Ol Kerendy*, pp. 1 m.; *SAD*, 1901, p. 22, n. 45; *SAD*, 1897, p. 32, n. 54; FOXBROOKE, l. c., pp. 14 s, 27 s.

[2] According to WHITEHOUSE *eupikata* is the name of a demon which starts the *endegaru*.

[3] In these and the following paragraphs whenever we refer to the elders" we intend the members of this class, unless otherwise stated.

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tive unit, and class, leaders are carefully selected and practically trained. It is from the outstanding senior members of the class, i. e. from those who have come to the fore since the very beginning, that leaders, whatever their function in Masai society, emerge.

The messengers (*ol aasai* – message) wear warriors' garments and decorations but no arms. "Their quest is a peaceful one" (WHITEHOUSE). "

Only two of the deputation will be introduced to the class-leader (*aigwenani*) by some of the elders. The message is delivered on behalf of all class candidates to the leader with some presents of honey. The matter is discussed by the leader and his council, and the messengers are advised of the date for the feast.

It is at this point that, according to WHITEHOUSE, *Endungore* is performed.

The ceremony is started by a dance (*Esyikata*) in full array " followed by a prayer to God (*Ngai Narok* – the black God) for the candidates. The elders then take the candidates apart and instruct them on their duties towards the elders and their seniors generally. As soon as this is over, a fire-stick, a male circumcision knife, and a small dead bird (other than a dove) are produced. The elders break the stick, pierce the eyes of the bird and break its legs, and lay a curse on the knife. " In this way, the elders formally lay claim to the sponsorship of a new agegroup. From that time the boys refer to their sponsors as *Il Piron* whilst the elders refer to the boys as *Il-Piron* " (WHITEHOUSE). Indeed, it should be noted, as FOSBROOKE points out, that though the term *il piron* is frequently used with reference to the elders, it is a reciprocal term expressing a mutual relationship.

The symbolism of the *Endungore* ceremony is plain: the ceremony closes an initiation period.

When the *Endungore* is over, some of the elders (presumably the *aigwenani*) and three or four of the candidates go with presents to inform the prophet that the firesticks have been broken. They say – *Ol piron lang ole, kiro nale.* "This is our fire stick, we are one ", which probably means that a new firestick is used to produce

" It is not clear whether the number of boy messengers is fixed. LEAKEY states that the *aasai*-boys number from six to twelve, DOWNES H. FOSBROOKE 6. Probably no significance is attached to the actual figure.

" Three sets are formed, each distinguished by proper decoration, the first wears ostrich-feathers, the second wears lion-mane head-dresses, and all the members of the third have their bodies decorated with white stripes.

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fire as a symbol of the new relationship between the elders and the candidates.

The next stage of *Eudungore-Engibata* is the election of the unit leader (*oiguenani*). This office is not popular with the boys, [1] and the election is kept as secret as possible from the person concerned. It is not very clear whether the election rest primarily with the boys or with the elders, both have a say in the matter since it is *of common concern*. [2] The selected person is chosen from the so called *ingopior*, i. e. "those who have shown ability and strength of character during the many debates already held" (WHITEHOUSE). This indicates that he must be a man of talent and personality. Some consideration is also given to the clan and family from which he comes. [3] The appointment is forced upon the boy, but only after the approval of his family has been obtained. The insignia of the *oiguenani* is a black club, which is presented to him by the leader of the elders. Prayers are also offered for the new elect.

The naming of the age-unit takes place now with great solemnity. Not all the candidates are present but only a few of them. [4] These are called *mojongoma*. They take part in the ceremony dressed up in full regalia and painted with red clay and chalk. [5]

On the following day a great sacrifice of two bullocks [6] is also

[1] For the same reason given for the *oi ogulos*.

[2] WHITEHOUSE states that "the names of possible candidates are submitted to the *il-piron* elders for consideration; the elders do not actually select a boy but prevent any unwise choice being made. The responsibility of making a choice rests with the boys themselves". On the other hand FOX, l. c., p. 430, states that in the first instance the nomination is made by the elders, and if the candidates are dissatisfied with him they may ask for a change. MERKER, l. c., p. 61, states the boys elect one of their member.

[3] Particularly, he must not be a member of the *Kayidenyi* clan, the clan of the *Iashon*.

[4] According to DAWSON, the *mojongoma* must be 42 if the ceremony is for the 'right-hand' unit; 44, if the ceremony is for the 'left-hand' unit. These boys must be pure Masai, and must never have killed a Masai.

[5] "The *mojongoma*", writes DAWSON, "assemble in the middle of the village and the *Oiguenani*, having poured honey beer into a trumpet made out of a *kudu* horn, blows two blasts on it and shouts the name. There is no answer as this name must never be mentioned by anyone. He again blows the horn and shouts out another name and is answered by a shout of 'Ee' from the *mojongoma*. He again shouts out the name and is again answered by a shout of 'Ee'". The name is later announced to the other candidates by the leader and the *mojongoma*.

[6] The sacrifice of the bullocks (one must be [illegible]) is [illegible] by great ceremonial. The two beasts are smothered and

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[553] [554] solemny performed. The festival lasts three days, during which none of the candidates are allowed to leave the place. It is only at the third day that they remove all decorations and are allowed "to cross the stream".

The fourth day after the sacrifice, all candidates are informed by their leader that they are free to return home, and on doing so he warns them that they must be honest and loyal. With this *Endoogoro-Esipiata* is over.

The relationship between the elders and the candidates, the *il piron* relationship, offers a special subject of analysis.

As stated above, the elders in question are members of the class next but one above the class to be formed by the initiation of the candidates. The gradation marking the two classes perhaps offers the clue to discovering why the sponsors of the candidates must be members of a definite class. We know from the rhythm of Masai class-system that the class next but one above the class of the candidates is generally the class of the fathers of the candidates. The *piron*-elders, therefore, possess the same social status as the fathers of the candidates. Hence, being on the same social level, the *piron*-elders possess the social capacity to be sponsors for the candidates. Such sponsorship brings about a mutual relationship between the two classes, a relationship respected by members of the classes concerned throughout their life.

The *piron*-elders have a real authority over the candidates so that no ceremony connected with initiation may be started by the candidate without the approval of the elders. The piron-relationship is officially established at the *Endoogoro* ceremony."

[555] their blood is drunk in turn by the *enjoogoro* and all candidates. Then two of the elders smear the face of the candidates with the bullocks' heart. The elders must be of the 'right-hand' unit, but they are assisted by two of the 'left-hand', who take their place when they are tired. The meat is distributed among the elders (if warriors, i. e. the last initiates, are attending, they are not supposed to be seen eating meat in public), and the usual sacrificial kidneys are prepared for all those present. All the time the bones of the animals are watched to prevent stealing for the purpose of magic, and finally they are burnt out and all the remains buried underground.

" That the *piron*-elders take a strong view of their power is shown by a case reported by Fosbrooke, pp. 14 s. In February, 1938, after *Endoogoro* had been performed, " a *Dunit* elder (i. e. senior elder, member of the class next but one above the candidates at the time) remained to circumcise his own sons, and himself lost in preparation for the event. The local *Dunit* (the *piron*-elder), hearing of this, determined to stop him, marched into his house (of

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Endungore-Engibata is performed both by the 'right-hand' and the 881
'left-hand' age units. This shows that the ceremony has a direct 561
effect on the institution of the age units as such and not as coefficients of the age-class. The formation of the age unit takes place during a official period in which all its prospective members must be properly initiated. This official period is primarily defined by the performance of *Endungore-Engibata*.

Endungore-Engibata obtains its value by emphasizing the negative aspect of the new initiation period, namely by making it illegal, a new *piron*-relationship having been established, to initiate any one except on the new *piron*-elders' authority, and by closing the association of further members to the previous age-unit. [46]

Engibata, therefore is to be considered as the opening ceremony for the institution of the age unit. After *Engibata* candidates are legally initiated and automatically, i. e. precisely for having been initiated during a definite approved period, become members of that age-unit.

From a territorial point of view *Endungore-Engibata* is a sectional ceremony. It is performed by minor territorial sections, but no single performance is acknowledged throughout Masailand, as [634] [184]
in the case of *Embolosat*. This makes clear the different value of *Embolosat* and of *Endungore-Engibata*. *Embolosat* opens the period for the institution of the age-class, and therefore its value is accepted

laps) and drank the beer themselves. It is confirmed by numerous reliable elders, that even if the *laibon* had given his sanction for the circumcision, the *Dorobo* elders would have been justified in acting as they did". Note the prophet's limited authority.

[46] This is clearly shown by the case reported by FOSBROOKE and quoted in previous footnote. The *Dwesi* man had failed to inform the *Dorobo* elders (the *piron*-elders) of his intention, and very probably his sons' initiation was intended to be performed by the outgone *piron*-elders. If the *Dwesi* man had his own way, his sons would have become members of the last age-unit, but illegally hence the so strong objection of the *Dorobo* elders. The above explanation is confirmed by what MERKER, pp. 70 s., states, namely that a fourth minimal division, *el oiropsa*, could be formed by those who were circumcised immediately before the official closing of the period for individual initiation. As below. In *NAD*, 1937, p. 33, n. 84, we read as follows: " the Officer in charge reported that a number of *laipak* (uncircumcised boys) who would have been too old to await the next '*Ngabata*' were circumcised and incorporated in an *Kidato* age ". Probably this is a similar case as that referred to by MERKER. The case shows that there is a definite closing time for every set. After this time every new initiate will be associated with a new set.

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by all the Masai. It is performed by the first group of class members (right-hand unit), but, as it were, on behalf of the whole class. *Endungore-Engibata* opens the period for the institution of the age unit. It is performed by the first batch of unit-members, who can be said to act on behalf of all their unit-mates.

Endungore-Engibata cuts the period which was opened by *Embolosat* into two sub-periods during which the age-units are instituted.

To these two ceremonies, *Embolosat* and *Endungore-Engibata*, correspond two closing ceremonies having analogous effects and limitations. Thus, every age-unit is officially closed by the performance of the *Unoto* ceremony, and the class is officially closed by the performance of the *Ngeherr* proper.

The problem of the interval between these ceremonies will be discussed below.

IV – INDIVIDUAL INITIATION [44]

Individual initiation, or the first initiation of individual members, is effected through the circumcision ceremonial.

This initiation is not, territorially, a sectional ceremony, but it is performed at any village where candidates are found. The ceremony is enacted by small (2 or 3: FOSBROOKE), [45] or perhaps larger (MERKER), [46] groups of candidates, or even singly (FOSBROOKE, and HOLLIS), [47] and the latter seems to be the general rule according to (FOX). [48] The guiding principle seems to be that a candidate must be initiated at his father's village. [49]

The expression "individual initiation" describes how each and every candidate is expected to pass through it, and how the cere-

[44] BAGGE, l. c., pp. 166 ss.; MERKER, l. c., pp. 61 ss.; HOLLIS, *Further Notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony*, in *J. R. A. I.*, 60, 1930, pp. 148 s.; *Notes on Marriage Customs among the Masai*, in *J. R. A. U. N. H. S.*, 42-43, 1931, pp. 190 ss.; LEAKEY, l. c., pp. 190 s.; FOSBROOKE, l. c., p. 28.

[45] FOSBROOKE, l. c., p. 28.

[46] MERKER, l. c., p. 62.

[47] FOSBROOKE, l. c., p. 28; HOLLIS, l. c., p. 297.

[48] HOLLIS, *The Nandi*, Oxford 1909, p. 190.

[49] "Each boy... at his own village separately" states FOX, *Notes on Marriage Customs among the Masai*, p. 190; and FOSBROOKE, l. c., p. 28, writes "... in the father's boma (village)". The coming together of few candidates for initiation makes the performance easier and economic. Thus, for a purely economic reason the children of poor parents frequently wait longer than others for initiation.

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monies are not performed by some selected individuals on behalf of others, as for *Embolosat* and *Endungore-Engibata*. Also from a territorial point of view all these ceremonies differ. A single performance of *Embolosat*, which opens the class-period, is valid for all Masailand; *Endungore-Engibata*, which opens the unit-period, is sectional; individual initiation is held at each village. The following diagram illustrates the correspondence.

A candidate's age for individual initiation is indicated by Fosbrooke as 16-17 years. The principle for admission to initiation seems to be that the candidate must have passed his puberty, and his father must have performed "the passing of the fence" as described above. [1]

Circumcision is the central point of Masai individual initiation. The ceremony is performed in three stages, *a*) a testing of the past moral behaviour of the candidate; *b*) the ordeal of circumcision; *c*) a period of special segregation.

a) On the eve of circumcision day the candidate is completely shaved by his mother. The elders are entertained with meat and beer [2] at the house of the candidate's mother. [3] Then the elders

[1] Cases may occur of boys who have to be initiated at an earlier age for some special reason. Fosbrooke, *l. c.*, p. 28 records the instance of a father's orphan having to be initiated in his early puberty in order to inherit.

[2] Hollis, *l. c.*, p. 297, states that a bullock is slaughtered and called *el-oirupukiok* — the (animal) that has caused him to be taken out of the boys' ranks. Fox says that a number (5, 6 or 9) of gourds of beer are offered to the elders.

[3] There is no special meaning in the use of the mother's house. The custom is occasioned by the arrangement of a Masai polygynic village. Every

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881 "ask the boy (candidate) various questions as to his past behaviour, and he is put on oath to answer truly".[78] Apparently no special ordeal such as we find among the Kipsigis is attached to this testing.

b) The operation may be performed "in the morning or the evening according to the particular custom of the family concerned" (Fox). Generally it takes place early in the morning. The operator [648] is said never to be a Masai. Generally he is a Dorobo, and sometimes a Kikuyu (Fox). This peculiarity is worth noting, especially if it is compared with the great care observed in selecting all other leaders or officers out of the pure Masai.[79]

881 Before the operation is performed, the candidates take a cold 304 bath in order to make their body insensible, or remain "shivering in a state of nudity until the sun rises" (Baggoe).[80] Candidates are then operated upon, outside the village near the right-hand post of the gate. The patient must not betray any sign of suffering. That would disgrace him and all his family. A few elders assist and support the patient during the operation, and help him to his mother's house after the wound has been washed. Once inside he is given food (fresh blood) and a special beverage, called *esg alipeta*, after which he is allowed to speak.

881 The circumcised youth is presented by his mother's brother [891] with new sandals, and henceforth he is not supposed to make use of any garment worn before the ceremony. A procession by four girls (cfr. Fox), waving branches takes place to the entrance of the [594] boy's hut. The elders are again entertained with meat and beer;

[595] wife of a man has her independent house where she lives with her children and cattle. But the whole homestead belongs to the father, and it would be quite correct, though not so precise, to say: the house of the candidate's father.

[78] We may assume that these questions are connected with the candidate's moral and sexual behaviour. Fosbrooke states that "prior to circumcision no youth may have intercourse with a circumcised woman. This is a rule most [834] strictly adhered to". The same custom is observed among the Nandi-speaking peoples.

[79] Cfr. the election of the *Oi Oi ogolos* at the *Enkolioni*, of the *ol emuli* boys, the *olpurunyi*, and the *meforopuss* at the *Endaapoo-Enpiloto*, of the *ol emuesi* at the waste.

[23] [80] Leakey states that it is "absolutely essential that the cattle shall be in their enclosure during the whole of the ceremony". *No further details are* given, nor are reasons offered for this fact which is not mentioned by any of our Masai authorities. However, it shows that circumcision is not related to the cattle aspect of Masai culture.

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the warriors with milk. This seems to be the feast that MERKER refers to as "the feast of the circumcised boys – *ol opor lel aijok emurate*". The newly circumcised remain in his mother's house until the wound is healed.

c) At this stage all the newly circumcised assemble from the various villages; they form small bands and go around shooting at small birds with special small bows and arrows. They wear women's clothes, women's ear-decorations (used also by elders) and a special headdress to which they append the birds they kill. During this period they are called *es sibolio*, pl. *i-sibolio* – the recluse, and are under strict regulations: At evening they must return home and enter the village before the cattle. They must not drink blood or cut meat or touch it with their hands. They must not wash. They must avoid girls. They must not fight with, or be struck by, any other: if this happens, milk must be put on their heads. They must not go out in the daytime without their special headdress.

The period of segregation may last for some months. At the end by order of the elders they are shaved by their mothers (hence they are called the shaved ones – *ol barusti* pl. *el barusi*) and presented by their fathers with the arms of the warriors, a spear, a sword and a shield. It is a peculiar distinction of the initiates to let their hair grow and to twist it into a pigtail of which they are very proud. [19] At this later stage the initiates will be called *el moruasi*, pl. *el moran*, i. e. those who have been circumcised.

It is generally stated, and apparently even by the Masai themselves, that as soon as a youth is circumcised he becomes a man. The evidence shows clearly that the expression "becomes a man" does not describe the real social status of a newly circumcised. Even if the statement is taken to mean that through circumcision a boy has attained the status of a man, and therefore is entitled to full participation in Masai social life, the statement is at variance with the evidence. As a matter of fact no Masai is allowed to marry soon after circumcision. In order to marry he must be at least a senior initiate, i. e. a member of the senior age-unit. [20] A newly circumcised (i. e. a junior, and to some extent also a senior initiate) may

[19] On this particular custom, cfr. MERKER, l. c., p. 143; ELLIOT, in *J. A. and E.*, 1894, p. 52, *sqq.* &c.

[20] The seniority of the age units is discussed in the next paragraph. With reference to the text above we note that even when a senior initiate marries, he is not allowed to beget children, as this is the privilege of the elders. See below, where LAGERCRANTZ and FOX are cited.

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not possess cattle of his own (cattle are the property of his father), and therefore he cannot form his own family which wuld not kelp nt. He may not eat meat in public; he may not drink milk on his own, but only wth some of his age-unit mates; he is expected to live in a special agregated village; and as a member of the age unit, he is, individually as well as corporately, under the social and political authority of the elders. Finally, from the military point of view, although he is allowed to take part in raids or other police action, he is still considered a learner and is expected to accompany the senior initiated in order to be trained properly.

The expression, then, "becomes a man" is merely an anticipation of a statusnot yet attained but towards which the first approved step has been taken.

Individual initiation causes a boy to become a full member of an age-unit, and hereby he is introduced into the active and governing sections of ociety. Indeed, in the present cultural situation of the Masai, circumcision is the main ceremony of individual initiation, and is th essential requirement for unit and class- membership. However, the initiate's membership into a definite unit or class derives primarily not from his individual initiation, but from the initiation being performed during the period for the institution of that unit or class. It is, therefore, from finding himself within a definite priod that a Masai initiate obtains a definite place in the structure of his own society. Indeed, this structural effect of time on the intiate is the essential point of the age-system as a phenomenon relevant to social structive. [1]

V – THE AGE-UNITS AND THEIR MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP [2]

The two age-units of a class are called respectively "the right-hand circumcision" (*emurata otatoi*) and the "left-hand circumcision" (*emurata ebyenyo*). These two units are instituted in turn, in succession of time 'the right-hand' first, 'the left-hand' second. That succession is usualy expressed in terms of seniority, as we see below.

Each age-unit however, is further subdivided. These subdivisions are formed by all those who have been individually initiated

[1] RADCLIFFE, p. 180, on structural time, and pp. 181 s. on structural progression and structural permanence.

[2] HOBLEY, l. c., p. 79; HOLLIS, *The Masai*, Oxford 1905, p. 261; LAYARD, l. c., p. 197; FOX, *Further notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony*, l. c., pp. 299 ss.; *JAI* 68, pp. 11 ss.; FISCHER, l. c., pp. 24 s.

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during the same season. FOSBROOKE states that "circumcision", or better individual initiation "is usually performed during or at the end of the rains, a time of plenty among the Masai," and is suspended during the dry season". 561

It is, therefore the seasonal rhythm that causes a further division of the period for the institution of the age-unit and thereby brings about the minimal divisions of the age-class. The phenomenon is in some way due to the nature of things. Indeed, as Fosbrooke continues, "it is natural that those circumcised in one season possess a marked feeling of affinity towards one another. This shows itself in the possession of a group name for each batch, the same names being employed from generation to generation". [1]

There is no need to stress that "the possession of a group name" indicates that a special group has been instituted.

Within the period for the institution of an age-unit, i. e., between the performance of two successive *Eadungore-Engibata*, individual initiations take place, according to FOSBROOKE [2] during four rainy seasons, and therefore four minimal age-divisions are formed as follows: (1) *il Changes opirr* or *il Kiperes*; (2) *il Paringotwo-lang*; (3) *il Kirimbot*; (4) *il Tarsio*. MERKER, [3] and HOLLIS, [4] state that the minimal divisions were three:

According to MERKER, (1) *el jangos obir*; (2) *el baringo duallas*; (3) *el perimbot*, and this last is said to be the youngest: "der jüngste Jahrgang". But MERKER states also that a fourth one is added, called *el cirogua*, which is formed by those who are initiated immediately before the performance of *Engibata*, i. e. before the proper period for individual initiation, or circumcision, is closed.

According to HOLLIS, the following is the order of names:

(1) *'L-changes-opir* — the big ostrich feathers; (2) *'L-tarsio* — the helpers; (3) *'L-paringotwolang* — our fleet runners.

It is not very clear what function these minimal divisions perform in the internal structure of the age-units. It is clear, however, that, being they formed in a succession of time, they define the status of seniority among the age-unit members and foster that [554]

[1] Note how economics ("a time of plenty") influence the holding of an initiation festival.

[2] This means that the names of these minimal divisions are always the same for every class.

[3] FOSBROOKE, l. c., p. 88.

[4] MERKER, l. c., pp. 70 s.

[5] HOLLIS, l. c., p. 333.

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561 [554] feeling of corporate responsibility and membership, which is a typical feature of the age-class system.

It seems certain that the left-hand unit does not group as many members as the right-hand unit. According to FOSBROOKE, the left-hand unit is formed only by the three last-named minimal divisions; FOX states that it may not occur at all.

561 634 The following tables illustrate the situation.

The first table is reproduced from FOSBROOKE (1939). * It refers to the number of age-unit members in four different places of the Kisongo section:

PLACES		Kibaya	Samatwa	Enguremet	Longido	TOTAL
Right-Hand Unit	Kisale	82	133	66	200	480
Left-Hand Unit	Mwishe	41	36	11	34	122

The total percentage of members of the left-hand unit as compared with the right-hand unit is therefore 26%.

The second table is taken from FOX (1950). It refers to the names of the age-units:

SECTIONS	Purko	Loita and Siria	Damat
Right-Hand Unit	Il Merisrori	Il Kishangop	Il Merisrori
Left-Hand Unit	Il Kitoip	none	Il Kitoip

SECTIONS	Kapatiei Lodokilani Matapato	Laitokitok	Kisongo
Right-Hand Unit	Il Aitotii	Il Kobusi	?
Left-Hand Unit	none	none	Il Kwimbot

561 Though the value of these tables is far from being absolute, they show that the right-hand unit is far more relevant than the left-hand unit. Indeed we find that candidates are far more anxious to join the right-hand unit than the left-hand unit. This may be explai-

* FOSBROOKE, l. c., p. 39; SOMJEE, *Some Problems of Anthropological Research in Kenya Colony*, in *J. A. I.*, Memorandum XXIII, 1948, p. 6. This date is taken from SOMJEE, p. 6. SOMJEE refers to the paper of FOSBROOKE as a manuscript. This was published in 1948.

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ned by the status of seniority which is higher for the right-hand unit than for the left-hand unit. 561

To study how the seniority status of the age-units affects the structure of the age-class may be useful to our analysis.

The right-hand unit, being the first of the two-units forming a class, is senior to the left-hand unit. A class, however, is not an absolute institutionalised set of persons, but it is related to other classes below or above itself. Therefore, the two age-units of a single class must also be considered in relation to other classes.

The right-hand unit at the time of its institution has no actual relation to the left-hand unit for the latter does not exist yet, but it has relation to the class next above itself and particularly to the left-hand unit of this.* Such a relationship makes the right-hand unit junior to the left-hand unit of that class next above. At a later stage, when the new left-hand unit is instituted, the right-hand unit in question becomes a senior unit. The senior right-hand unit and the junior left-hand unit will finally merge into a class. Therefore, if a class is regarded as an absolute body, the right-hand unit is the senior and the left-hand unit the junior. But if the class is viewed as a related body, both the right-hand and the left-hand unit pass through a first stage of juniority, and a successive stage of seniority.

It is important to stress that in the structure of a single age-class the right-hand unit is always the senior unit and the left-hand unit is always the junior unit. 561 554

The status of seniority, as contrasted to that of juniority, is not a mere abstraction. It gives rise to some special privileges which are recorded by FOSBROOKE as follows: (1) "the marking on the shield known as *ourot enyuki*;" (2) the spear handle of black wool called *enjata narok*; (3) the right to hold a dance without seeking permission

* One should note that a class is finally instituted, i. e., the two age-units merge into a new single age-set, when the first unit of the next following class has been instituted. See below on the discussion on the overlapping rhythm.

[531] According to HOBLEY, p. 78, there may be six marks in the coats-of-arms of Masai warriors which they paint on their shields: 1. the warrior red mark (*en nerai'enyiki*), to which FOSBROOKE refers; 2. the black mark (*en ai-rai'enyiki*); 3. the circumcision mark; 4. the coat-of-arms of the clan; 5. the coat of leadership (*Kerpenleiboshoishoi*); 6. the mark of bravery or distinction. Of all these marks the most important is the warriors' red mark (No. 1. The mark of the clan was rare in HOBLEY's time. The mark of bravery is reserved for the warriors who distinguish themselves in military action. The shield of the junior initiates (*il korosit*) is poor in colour and pattern. They are allowed only the black mark, the red one is reserved for the senior initiates.

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561 554 from the senior moran". To these, according to MERKER, p. 82, should be added the formation of the initiates' segregated village (manyatta).[1]

561 578 The behaviour set up by seniority relationship is one of open rivalry between the two adjacent units. Members of the senior unit look down with contempt on those of the junior unit and the latter retaliate as best as they can. The conflicts and clashes which ensue seem to be accepted as a normal social institution and in fact they are looked upon with favour.

FOURNIOUX,[2] notes that initiates make no formal demand for the above mentioned privileges of seniority. "The juniors", he writes, "will assume one of the privileges, and when met by a band of seniors will promptly be beaten up and retreat. This process continues till wounds become frequent in these affrays. When the seniors feel that they are on the point of losing their ascendancy, they graciously hand over these privileges to the juniors, who may then proceed to the *Unoto* ceremony". A detailed description of the same process is given by MERKER.[3]

561 The claim for the privileges of seniority and the *Unoto* ceremony mark the final stage of the official period for performing individual initiations and therefore for instituting the age-unit. There is a certain regular interval between these ceremonies, which our authorities try to estimate in terms of years. It seems, however, that the deciding factors are, the adjustment between the senior and junior initiates, the former handing over the privileges of seniority to the latter, and the agreement of the *piron*-elders that the proper time has come for closing the age-unit period.

VI – THE FINAL INSTITUTION OF THE AGE-UNIT[4]

554 561 The final institution of the age-unit is brought about by the performance of the *Unoto* ceremony. This is described by FOURNIOUX,[5] as "the ceremony of promotion from junior to senior

[1] FOURNIOUX in his chart, p. 34, puts this immediately following the period of the individual initiation (circumcision) of each unit.

[2] FOURNIOUX, l. c., p. 38.

[3] MERKER, l. c., pp. 80 ss.

[4] MERKER, l. c., pp. 71 s.; ROTHA, l. c., p. 147; HOBLEY, l. c., pp. 309 ss.; HOLLINGSWORTH, *An Administrative and Political History of the Masai Reserve*, London 1949, pp. 60 ss.; *KAR* 48, p. 8; *P.A.D.* 1908, p. 81; LEAKEY, l. c., pp. 196 ss.; FOX, l. c., pp. 481 s.; WOODWARD, l. c., pp. 199 ss.; *P.A.D.* 1926, pp. 69 s.; FOURNIOUX, l. c., pp. 38 s.

[5] FOURNIOUX, l. c., p. 38.

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warriorhood ". He also states that Eunoto " is probably the best known and most ceremonial ceremony in the Masai age-grade system ".

Eunoto is not performed at a single place for whole Masailand, but in every territorial section or group of sections.[1] It consists of three main stages: (a) a testing of the candidates by the elders; (b) the election of the ceremonial leader of the unit; (c) a sacrifice of a bull.

a) The first stage takes place in a special hut called *singira*.[2] Not all the candidates, i. e., junior initiates, are allowed into the *singira*, but only those who have kept the sexual regulations which bind junior initiates. In order that no one may enter the *singira* under false pretences the entrance is barricaded by the elders. According to LEAKEY,[3] another test is performed inside the hut aiming at detecting those who have entered surreptitiously.

In the annual report of the *N.D.*,[4] we read that every candidate is expected to give " an account " of his past life. " The importance of the *E-Unoto* " states the same report, " lie in the fact that it imposes an obligation upon a warrior who has disgraced himself in any way to clear himself of the stigma before he can marry and settle down as a respected Elder of the tribe ". " The *O-Singira* " says FOX,[5] " gives the warriors permission to have sexual relations with initiated women ".

b) The nomination of the ceremonial leader (*olaunoni*, pl. *il-aunoch*, or *il-oiuni*) takes place inside the *singira* hut. The elders

[1] LEAKEY's statement, p. 134, that at the Eunoto " all the members of a given group (i. e., age-unit) from the whole of the Masai country, north, south, east and west are required to be present " is emphatically denied by FOX, p. 161, and PENWORTHY, p. 39. According to FOX the following sections perform it: (a) Purko, (b) Loita and Siria, (c) Dorani, (d) Kaputei, Loitokitok and Matapato, (e) Loitokitok, (f) Kisongo. And PENWORTHY says that the Eunoto is celebrated " by sections or groups of sections " and " attended by as many warriors as possible, " but by no means all ". KOTTMAN, on HOLLIS's authority, recorded that the Eunoto was held by the Purko, Kakonyuko, Dalalekutuk and Damat on the Kisongo. The Siguroi, Matapato, Kaputei and other divisions where it united their best.

[2] There are considerable discrepancies of the singira. HOLLIS states that it is a 'very big hut'; KOTTMAN says " not so big "; HOBLEY " small ". LEAKEY and FOX state respectively " an enormous ", and a " very large " hut. Probably it all depends on the actual number of the initiates involved.

[3] LEAKEY, l. c., p. 134.

[4] *N.D.*, p. 31.

[5] FOX, l. c., p. 168.

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and the candidates have previously agreed on the person to be appointed, and the matter is also discussed with the prophet (laibon). As in previous cases, these transactions are kept secret because the office is not popular, and the selected man and his family would avoid the election. Only a popular man and a " pure Masai " distinguished for his physical strength, may be appointed *oononi*. Generally the *oipurean* is not elected, but in some cases he may be. "

According to MERKER, p. 73, on the day of his official appointment, the selected man is seized and forced to sit on a stool in the centre of the *enginra*. He is then clothed with elders' garments and decorations. FOSBROOKE, [2] states that soon after his appointment he will be given a wife and cattle by his age-mates.

The unpopularity of the office seems to derive from the fact that the elected man must settle down and behave as an old man as to the peculiar nature of the office. This is described by FOSBROOKE, [3] and his description sums up the descriptions and statements of all other authorities. [4] " The duties of the position (of the *oononi*) are obscure, but so far as is known the *laiwuon* appears to be a sort of scapegoat for the age (unit). If he flourishes and begets many children, and if his cattle prosper and increase, it is a bad omen for the rest of the age (unit). But his adversity will indicate the age (unit)'s prosperity. He must do everything in advance of his age-mates, marry, settle down, make the final payment that binds the marriage. It is as though the *oononi* standing on the brink of elderhood, send forth the *laiwuon* as an explorer into the unknown country, so that any bad luck which may be awaiting them shall be focussed on one individual and not on the whole age (unit). But the *laiwuon* is held in great respect by his age-mates, and any demands that he makes must be fulfilled. It is stated that he is the only official whose order must be obeyed. In discussing this with an elder, I pointed out that this should give the office

[2] *loc. cit*, p. 6.
[3] FOSBROOKE, l. c., p. 38.
[4] FOSBROOKE, l. c., pp. 39 s.
[5] While on p. 39 FOSBROOKE states Unale " is performed by sections or groups of sections. The Kisongo traditionally perform the ceremony at Engabet near Kisa, i. e., on the eastern slopes of Mankal Mountain, actually in the Arusha district. As many as possible of the age attend, but by no means all ". On p. 38 he writes that " all sections and areas meet together for the main ceremony ". Evidently this statement must be qualified by what he says above.

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great political importance, in reply to which the elder indicated that such did not necessarily follow as "we can always tell the lemoos what order to give".

c) The sacrifice of a bull is then performed with great ceremonial. HOLLIS,[99] describes the contest in which the candidates compete in getting hold of a horn which was previously thrown into a fire.

With reference to this sacrifice a special officer is appointed. He is called oberumpeyo; he has a ceremonial status and must prepare the hide-rings from the skin of the bull. He is also described by the author of *M.E.* 43 as "the official charmmaker of the morus". His function, however, seems to be limited to Uasin.

Great emphasis is laid by WARMELOW,[100] on what he calls "the fire-drilling ceremony", which as FOSBROOKE also says, "must in fact be the waste". The ceremony is described by WHITEHORNE in connection with the first erection of the segregated village of the initiates or morupatia.[101]

The fire is ceremonially lighted by the elders, and it must be carried into the new dwellings of the village. The next morning after this ceremony, the candidates who have become senior initiates are blessed, and prayers to the Black God are offered for them.[102]

At the waste, the women first, and then the other initiates, shave their hair. Pig-tails, however, are again fitted after the ceremony.

Some (four or five) months after the ceremony, when the senior

[99] HOLLIS, l. c., pp. 300 ss.

[100] WARMELOW, l. c., p. 188.

[101] This circumstance supports HOBLEY's statement that one of the privileges demanded by the junior initiates is the building of their own segregated village, l. c., pp. 80 ss.

[102] It is of some interest to reproduce here from WARMELOW, the prayer recited by the elders on this occasion. It shows clearly how the senior initiates are about to enter the most important stage of their life as members of Masai society. This is the prayer: "Be trustworthy. Oh, return safely, O God. — Become ye men and of God. — May the thieves pass you by. — With them who love us that they may find dry straw on their journeys. — Lenana and Sultali and Mbatian wish the safe return. — Grow up. Become possessed of wise heads. Become as great as the Kilimanjaro. — Be the fathers of my children, and bring them up well. Have many wives. — May God love you. May the evil hill of the night guard them. May our age be the heaviest". The expression of the first name "return safely" probably refers to the raid which follows soon. Lenana, Sultali, Mbatian were prophets.

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initiates have returned from a meat festival in the bush a raid is organized. According to Hinton this is called, "the (fulfilment) of the vow" or "the (selection) of the chief" (*Ee-oo-'a-dowa-arubi Ee-o-'aunte*).[46]

The main reason for this raid, is the strong desire of the new senior initiates to show their ability and enjoy the satisfaction of the military efficiency they have reached.

At the ends the age-unit assumes a new name.[47]

Unete if seen with relation to the social status of the initiates is undoubtedly a promotion ceremony. *Junior* become *senior* initiates. But if we consider the ceremony in connection with the institution of the age-unit, we find that *Unete* brings together all those who have been individually initiated during previous years. In other words it merges into one body the three minimal divisions, it gives them a corporate status and institutes the age-unit. The performance of individual initiation is not ended with *Unete*. It still takes place, but irregularly, and all those initiated at this time form the fourth minimal division, *el oiropus*, as reported by Hinton.[48] The ceremony closing the age-unit's legal period for individual initiation is *Endongoro*, which, as we have seen, is performed by the *piron-elders* of the next age-unit.

Thus the institution of the age-unit is brought about by three different ceremonies, namely, *Enpiloto* as the opening ceremony, *Unete* as the instituting ceremony, and *Endongoro* as the closing ceremony.

The closing value of *Endongoro* is due to the negative aspect of this ceremony as we noted.

The point raised by the interval between all these various ceremonies is most confusing. The reason for this is that the interval is defined by all our authorities in terms which are foreign to Masai age-system. Therefore, we must accept the number of years which they suggest as more or less broad approximations.

[46] "The (fulfilment) of the vow" is not a special term for the raid which follows *unete*, but is applied to any raid undertaken after a long pause. Cf. Hinton, l. c., p. 301, n. 3.

[47] Fox, l. c., p. 328, writes that "the present (1908) age (unit) of Purko warriors was called *Ai-ingi* prior to the *E-Unete* when they took the name of *Il-Aiboneti*.

[48] Fosbrooke, l. c., p. 37, speaks of a "hiatus" between the age-units, and we think that such hiatus is that period which runs between the *Unete* and the *Endongoro-Enpiloto*.

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MERKER,[166] states that each year for three successive years, [54]
candidates are individually initiated and formed into separate mini-
mal age-divisions. A fourth one follows immediately before the
closing ceremony is celebrated. He does not state the length of
the interval between two successive closing ceremonies.

HOLLIS,[167] is very definite on this point. He writes that indi-
vidual initiation is performed for four years in succession, and all
those initiated during these years belong to the right-hand unit.
"An interval of about three and half years then intervenes before
another festival is held". All those initiated during the next four
years belong to the left-hand unit. Therefore, according to HOLLIS,
the period for the institution of each age-unit would be about seven
and half years.

LEAKEY,[168] states that Eunoto is celebrated after "nine years
of junior warriorhood". But FOX,[169] disputes this and says that
"nowadays it takes place from three to five years after initiation".

WATERMEYER,[170] writes that "the (initiation) ceremonies which
commence about every 7 years extend over a period of about 5
years".

FOSBROOKE,[171] says that the right-hand unit performs Eunoto
7 years after their initiation period has been opened, and the left-
hand unit 5 years after it.

All these statements show clearly that there is no hard and fast
definition of the period for the institution of the age-units, and
they are evidence that our system of measuring time does not apply
to the Masai. The major factor for fixing that period are the pre-
sence of candidates, the authority of the elders stating that the
right time for performing the various ceremonies has come, and
also the regular occurrence of good rainy seasons.

We may, however, say that the period of seven-eight years is
a good approximation of what obtains in actual fact. If we take

[166] MERKER, l. c., p. 76.

[167] HOLLIS, l. c., p. 303. His actual words are misleading. He states that "one feast (circumcision feast) is held in each subdivision every year for four years in succession". But it is certain that circumcision is not performed at [54]
one single ceremony in each sub-division, but in any village where there are candidates.

[168] LEAKEY, l. c., p. 186.

[169] FOX, l. c., p. 455.

[170] WATERMEYER, l. c., p. 146.

[171] FOSBROOKE, l. c., p. 80.

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Ingiluata as the first ceremony for the institution of an age-unit, we may put *Emuto* at an interval of about three or four years; and then *Endaregere* some two or three years, or more, after that.[109]

VII – THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF THE AGE-UNIT

The generic reference made by our authorities either to "the elders" or "the candidates", and so on, may cause the false impression that those engaged in the initiation ceremonies always act as a whole and corporate group. In point of fact, general meetings are rare occasions, and they are also restricted to territorial sections or groups of sections.

Only a few representatives of the age-units take the most important decisions in connection with the institution of the units.

We have mentioned the *ingopior* or *ingobir*, sg. *engobiro*. These are the best of the age-units initiates. It is they who first approach the elders and assist their own leaders, who usually are selected from among their number. These are, generally, the most senior. According to the information of FOSBROOKE,[110] they form "an inner council for appointing or degrading the *laiguenan*, and for the conduct of important public business". However, "there is no definite office of *engobiro*"; they emerge according to their talents, skill and personality. Thus "they are not necessarily confined to the first batch of initiates", but any one else, even of the last batch, whose qualities excel may be considered an *engobiro*.

The elders here referred to are, as said, the *piron* elders. Their office of *spokesmen* is thus summarized by FOSBROOKE,[111]: "the *il piron*-elders, i. e., the guardians of the youths, have to coach the senior boys in citizenship, taking them to the *laiken*, making them sit at their meetings, etc.".

Of the age-unit leaders (*oiguenani*) FOSBROOKE,[112] distinguishes three kinds, i. *oiguenani loonginku pokin*, lit., the *oiguenani* of

[109] One of the two facts we possess concerning the *Samburu* is that "the circumcision etc. takes place at intervals of seven years". See WERNER, *l. c.*, p. 8. For the other tribes in Masai District there are no indications in the various reports of the *NAD* concerning the above period. Cf. the references in *NAD*, 1930 and 1937 with 1933 and 1937 which, however, are very vague to be of any real value.

[110] FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, pp. 34 s.

[111] FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, p. 34.

[112] FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, p. 34.

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all the cattle: the chief leader of the age-unit; 2. *ol aiguenani loi kuma orok*; a duly appointed *aiguenani* to whom a black club is presented; 3. *e murt ol aiguenani*, lit. the 'neck of the *aiguenani*', who is the righthand man of the *aiguenani* proper (No. 2), in whose absence no important decisions are taken.

The election of the *aiguenan loonyiku pokin* is described by FOSBROOKE,[116] in connection with the *Unoto*. We have noted, however, that his statement in this passage is contradictory.[117] Unfortunately, there is no other authority on the matter, but one gets the impression that the *aiguenan loonyiku pokin* is never elected as such: he emerges from among his fellow *aiguenak* as the best man for the office.

The *aiguenan loi kuma orok* is the ordinary leader elected at the *Eunibata* by the elders and the *ingobir*. He is elected from a list of prospective candidates. Second to him is his deputy and assistant, namely, "the neck of the *aiguenani*" (*emurt ol aiguenani*).

The *aiguenani* is the leader of the age-unit in his section.

FOSBROOKE mentions the case of some subalterns being elected when the number of the age-unit members in one area is too big and the *ingopir* feel that another leader is needed.

The function of the *aiguenan* is political, military and to some extent judicial, his authority extends to his age-mates of whom he may be said to be "primus inter pares".[118]

Every *aiguenani*, even the *aiguenani loonyiku pokin*, is primarily responsible for his territorial section or group of sections or area for which he has been appointed. He has to foster good relations among members of his age-unit, between his unit and other units either in his or in other sections. He is responsible for seeing the elders and the prophet in order to obtain their approval for *Unoto* and any other ceremony or matter connected with his age unit.

In military activity the *aiguenani* was more important in former times than at present. When large actions were organised and different sections threw their lot together, the various *aiguenak* united according to their seniority. This might have been the occasion

[116] FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, p. 36.

[117] In no description of *Unoto* is there mention of an *aiguenani* being elected. The only officers connected with *unoto* are the *emuroni or olaiyo*, and the *olorienyana*.

[118] Cf. MERKER, *l. c.*, p. 84.

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when the *oipuonani loonyioke pokin* was recognized as a general leader. [94]

Judicial activity is not a real part of the *oipuonani*'s office. It all depends on his personality and on how much he is favoured by his age-mates, who may ask him to arbitrate and settle their disputes. [95]

The election and the status of the *ewuesi-ebuo* as the ceremonial leader of the age-unit has already been described. A peculiar duty of the *ewuesi*'s office is the responsibility " for the smart turn-out of the *morua* (initiates) ". [96] MERKER, [97] and HOLLIS, [98] state that the *ewuesi* was responsible to the prophet (*laibon*) for the organization of raids. The anonymous author of *MS.* 45, p. 4, describes him as the manager of the unit when this was at war: " as long as he is alive they (the unit-members) cannot be beaten by the enemy. For this reason they take him on their raids ".

The relationship between the *oipuonani* and the *ewuesi* is not clear. It seems certain that the latter has a more ceremonial and ritual character than the former.

The term of office for all these officers is limited to the existence of the age-unit as such; but they will always be distinguished and sought for their opinion.

The analysis of the unit's leaders does not offer a complete picture of the internal structure of the age-unit. This structure rests on two other institutions, namely the *ewopatio*, which is the proper

[94] The *oipuonani* was not expected to take part in the actual fighting; he had to be in the rear to govern the action or, as FOSBROOKE, p. 36, puts it, " probably because the *loipuonan* were the chiefs which had been circumcised from the *laibon*, and its loss could not be risked ". At present, adds FOSBROOKE, p. 36, " the relations between senior *loipuonak* and their juniors are very lax. It is probable that this is due to the prohibition of raiding and consequent reduction of the occasions on which large-scale concerted efforts are required. In the old days when large groups of *morua (initiates)* came together for raids the senior *loipuonak* (sic.) most of necessity have exerted his position, and the others must have obeyed him, to ensure the success of the venture ".

[95] " It appears ", writes FOSBROOKE, p. 36, " to be the privilege of the aggrieved party to select his judges... If a local *loipuonan* has a reputation for fairness and justice, he will be called even from a distance, but proceedings are not invalidated if no *loipuonan* is present ".

[96] FOSBROOKE, p. 42. So, an initiate was supposed to cut off his pig-tail earlier without the permission of the *ewuesi*.

[97] MERKER, *l. c.*, p. 198.

[98] HOLLIS, *l. c.*, p. 288 n. 1.

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residential place of the initiates, and the *siriti* which is a manifold grouping of comradeship.

The *manyatta* is the village where the initiates live in segregation from other people. Externally it does not differ from any ordinary village. Some authorities state that there is only one *manyatta* for each territorial section.[66] But FOX,[67] qualifying LEAKEY, states that this is only true for some special ceremonies as when all the initiates of one section come together to perform some special ceremonies, as, e. g., *Eunoto*.

In the *manyatta* the initiates are assisted by their mothers who do the housework, and by some uninitiated girls (*na nendja ne dito*)[68] who are there mostly for their sexual pleasures.[69] Uninitiated boys may also live in the *manyatta* for the menial works and for tending cattle.[70]

The groupings named *siriti*, pl. *siriti*, are formed, according to WESTERMANN,[71] at a meeting called by the *ingabit* when it is decided to build the *manyatta*. Membership of the *siriti* is a matter of free choice. An initiate is free to join any *siriti*, and he is free to change it for another soon after his first election. But if he does so when the *manyatta* has been formed, he "incurs the bitter resentment" of his *siriti*-mates, and he may even be fined for that.

As far as numbers go, WESTERMANN states that "groups of 3 (initiates) will go together to join the same company" (*siriti*).[72] MERKER, however, says that the inhabitants of a single *manyatta*

[66] HOBLEY, l. c., p. 48. LEAKEY, l. c., p. 180. HOLMS, l. c., p. 81 writes that "every section has usually seven three favourite districts, in each of which is a village, called 'manyatta'".

[67] FOX, l. c., p. 421.

[68] HOBLEY, l. c., p. 48.

[69] Although the sexual life of the initiates with these girls is prominent and free, full sexual intercourse is strongly condemned.

[70] According to HOBLEY, l. c., p. 110, the initiates who belong to the *siriti* trade usually do not share the village with the other initiates, but have their own villages and the girls who live with them are from families of the same trade. The *siriti* initiates organize their own raids, but because they are few their booty is always small and they are easily deprived of it by other warriors.

[71] WESTERMANN, l. c., p. 180.

[72] WESTERMANN describes the *siriti* as based on the clan. The *Ilti*, op. p. 6, states that "*manyatta* is inhabitated by the warrs of one particular clan". It seems, however, that this is not a fixed principle, and certainly does not obtain with the Kisongo. Cf. FOX, l. c., p. 24.

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may be from 50 to 100; and the anonymous *MS.* 46, p. 6, records that in a *manyatta* there may be from 20 to 30 huts. The extension of the term is not clear. It may be applied alternatively to the whole group forming a *manyatta*, and to a subdivision of this. Thus, we find in *MS.* 40 that each *sirit* is said to have its own 'portion' of the *manyatta*. Similarly, Fox says that each *sirit* is commanded by a captain (*il oipurmon loo sirit*), and that the *manyatta* is ruled by a special leader (*il oipurmon 'l ol power* — the leader of the age-mate), who is at the same time the captain of his own *sirit*. [90]

The fact that the members of the *sirit* " as a rule quarrel pretty regularly with other *sirit* of their *manyatta* " is emphasized by *MS.* 46, p. 3. There is no indication that the internal organization of the *manyatta* is based on the seniority of its members. We may, however, assume quite safely that that is the main principle which regulates the relationship of the *manyatta's* of the two age-units existing at the same period. No special information is available on this point, but it is obvious that members of the two age-units have their own *manyatta's* and we also know that they unite in time of war, the juniors being trained by the seniors.

Seemingly the *sirit* division has a military function and serves to readily organize warriors for raids. Merker, [91] however, applies the term to a special partnership which two age-mates contract on their way to the battle-field. They pledge themselves to assist each other while fighting. They refer to each other as 'my companion' (*os sirit ai*), and if one of them falls, the other has to recover his arms. [92] Ten or twelve such companions form a company.

The term *sirit* is further applied to the grouping of initiates who come together for a meat festival (*os sirit el kel*). This group consists according to Merker, [93] of five or six age-mates who go to a segregated place where they revel on ox-meat.

The meat festivals (*el kel*, pl. *i kel*) are held once or twice a month,

[90] Very probably the leader of the *manyatta* is no other than the *oipurmon kel kuna sirit*, as indicated. The two different expressions may be taken as describing two different functions exercised by the same person. *Oipurmon kel kuna sirit* means lit. " the speaker with the black club ", and *'l oipurmon 'ol al power*, " the speaker of the age-unit ".

[91] Merker, l. c., p. 78.

[92] Merker, l. c., p. 80: " Die Knüpfen der Gefährten ist so, dass jeder von ihnen Kamajis bekommen muss, wenn er fällt, seine Waffen in Sicherheit zu bringen ". The spirit as a military company is also mentioned by *MS.* 46.

[93] Merker, l. c., p. 84.

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they last for three or four days and generally take place before a raid.[46]

At this point it is relevant to discuss the relationship of military organization and the age units. Merker,[47] gives a description of Masai military organization. He assumes the existence of a standing army (das stehende Heer), in which he distinguishes the recruits, the warriors and the reserve.

The recruits are "the shaved ones" (el kerset).[48] These, together with "the warriors" (el moran = initiates)[49] constitute the peacetime force (Friedensstärke), under conscription.[50]

The junior elders come into action in time of war but they may be reckoned as members of the standing army ("... kann man als Reserve annehmen und mit zum stehenden Heer rechnen..."). The senior elders take arms only in defence of their own territorial areas and settlements (Distrikt).

The above description appears to be very formal.[51] It shows, however, that military activity is not confined to the initiates but extends to the classes of elders. And this is a relevant point. We can say, therefore, that the initiates become warriors not to the exclusion of the other classes above them. A further point brought out by Merker's description is the distinction between an offensive army constituted by the so called recruits, the warriors and the reserve, and a defensive army in which the senior elders are also incorporated.

It would be of great interest to know how the organization of a raid or any other military action is formed, and whether there is any relationship between such an organization and the complete

[46] Merker, l. c., p. 66. See also Hinde, l. c., p. 317. At p. 286, n. 1, he states that "I [sc. am told] are special places erected in the woods, to which the warriors retire when they slaughter cattle".

[47] Merker, l. c., p. 78.

[48] "The shaved ones", el kerset, pl. il kerset, is the term applied to those who have just come out of their individual initiation and have been given the warriors' arms. They are the junior initiates.

[49] We may assume that the general term "warriors" as used by Merker at this place (see also p. 66) refers to the senior initiates.

[50] Merker, l. c., p. 78, regards circumcision as a kind of compulsory conscription (... schon — der allgemeinen — Wehrpflicht bei Eintritt...).

[51] One may note here that it is Merker's tendency to describe Masai customs in a way which fits his own schemes. As before, his thesis on the sociological origin of the Masai has so influenced his way as to make his informations in many a case unreliable.

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system. Unfortunately, no such information is available. Hollis, [1] describes the actual action in detail but from a purely tactical or strategical point of view.

Special distinctions may be attained by the initiates either in military actions or in social life. Thus, if a warrior is outstanding in war for his courage and he "kills many savages" (Hollis (a) he is called "the bull", *ol oingok*; if he is liberal and through the assistance of his father "frequently slaughters bullocks" for his comrades, he is called "the benefactor", *E-punini*. These distinctions as described by Merker, [2] would suggest the existence of special offices with structural significance. He states that "the bulls" play a leading role (eine führende Rolle), and are the leaders in the fight ("Sie sind die Anführer im Kampf"); "the benefactors" retain a special position (eine besondere stellung). It seems, however, that there are no such institutionalized offices as "the Bulls" and "the Benefactors"; they represent two different distinctions which may be attained by any of the initiates. This seems to be the opinion also of Hollis, [3] when he states that "the warriors are fond of the titles *E-oingok* (the bulls) and *E-punini* (the generous people), for they may then wear bells or a bracelet called *di-bongos*".

The internal structure of the age-unit, we may now conclude, is based on various principles, which give shape to different groupings.

The essential principle is the contemporaneity of initiations either during the same season in which the minimal age divisions are instituted, or during the same initiation period in which all the minimal divisions merge into a single age-unit.

A second principle is the residential principle, on which the *manyatta* and the *nirit* are organized. The *nirit ol bul*, or the grouping for the meat festival in special segregated huts also seems to be due to this principle.

The military principle seems to give a special military aspect to the *nirit* proper, as found in the *manyatta*, and, apparently, the same principle extends to the temporary capillary formation of special partnership between two fighting warriors.

Corresponding to these various groupings there are leaders, as mentioned above, who organize their age mates in the performance of the various ceremonies and functions of the age-unit. It is very

[1] Hollis, l. c., pp. 38 ss.
[2] Merker, l. c., p. 66.
[3] Hollis, l. c., p. 286.

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important to note their temporary and personal function. In this connection one should also notik that, however complex the organisation of the age-unit may appear, its character and nature is entirely democratic. The importance of the *ingabir* as a council to the *eiponan* has never been stressed sufficiently. Although their office is not very well defined, it is a fact that they may exercise a real control over the leaders of the age-unit whom they have power to degrade.[100]

The following diagram illustrates the internal structure of the age-unit.

VIII – THE FUNCTION OF THE AGE-UNIT

The most apparent function of the age-unit is military. This is also the aspect stressed by all our authorities, so much so that it is commonly stated that the function of the age system is military.[101] The evidence we have just analysed suggests a somewhat different description.

We have already noted that the initiates do not become war-

[100] The relationship of the prophet, below, to the structure of the age-unit and age-class is illustrated below in connection with the latter.

[101] Cf. for all others Fosbrooke, l. c., p. 30: "The basic function of the age-grade system is doubtless military".

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rise to the exclusion of other classes above them. Their status is that of trainees in the case of *junior* initiates, and of full warriors in the case of *senior* initiates. Although it is not incorrect to state that they are in a condition of conscripts it is wrong to say that military activity is solely their privilege.

Residential segregation is generally connected with the military activity of the initiates. Merker states that the manyat were ordinarily situated in the strategic positions of the country.[xx]

But there are other points to show that this segregation was not intended only for military purposes. Thus the initiates are not allowed to form their own family until they are elders. They are also forbidden to eat meat "seen by women", and because their mothers and girls reside with them in their village, the initiates hold their meat festivals on their own in a secluded place. Similarly, they are not allowed to have milk unless they are in groups of two or three at least.[xxi]

It is difficult to see any relationship between these restrictions and the initiates' military activity. It seems evident that members of the age-units are still considered not sufficiently qualified to deal with cattle, and matters connected with them such as meat and milk, with complete freedom. Apparently, they do not have the full possession of any cattle; the share of their mother's cattle to which they have right remains the property of their fathers' until they get married. And to the father goes the best part of the booty which they take from a raid.[xxii] Since cattle are the primary source of wealth and food, we must conclude that the initiates are still in a state of dependence on their fathers socially and economically.

This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that an analogous dependence holds true of their political activity. On this they depend entirely on their grown-elders.[xxiii]

[xx] The statement is confirmed by Hinde's description l. c., p. 81. He says that the manyat were always built free from any kind of cover, "if possible on a plateau overlooking a good water supply", and "commanding many miles of plain".

[xxi] The initiates have a right to ask everybody for milk which cannot be refused. Generally they address themselves to their grown-elders.

[xxii] Merker, l. c., p. 80. "Das Vorkommt dar an Kriegern beteiligtenen Beute besteht in erbeuteten Vieh und Rinder in der Gesamtzahl der Feinde".

[xxiii] Other restrictions such as the prohibition against smoking and drinking beer, both privileges of the elders, confirm the general status of inferiority of the initiates with relation to the elders.

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Thereupon we infer that the function of the age-unit is primarily social. Its scope is to organise the initiates into a corporate body, separate and distinct from other similar bodies, and to lead them, both as individuals and as a corporate whole, towards a full social and economic independence and towards taking a full share in political life.[340]

IX – THE CEREMONIES FOR THE INSTITUTION OF THE AGE-CLASS

The institution of the age class is brought about by the performance of some special ceremonies, of which the most important is the *eyakuv* proper. Before this takes place, other ceremonies, such as "the slaughtering of the ox with jumping" (*ol gotoo l ol keri*), "the *eyakuv* of milk" and "the *eyakuv* of meat", must be performed by every initiate. Through these performances the initiate obtains the status of an elder. The consul in the forerunner of all his age-mates. As was seen, at Uasin, he is given the status of an elder, and soon after that he settles down as a married man.

LEAKEY,[341] states that a warrior (i. e. an initiate) who marries cannot have sexual intercourse with his initiated wife.[342] FOX,[343] qualifies LEAKEY's statement and says that such a case "is hypothetical, and does not occur in practice", because usually the senior initiates marry after the *eyakuv* of milk.

MERKER,[344] is our only authority for "the slaughtering of the ox with jumping". The ceremony consists in a meat festival offered by the candidate to the elders of the neighbourhood of his father's village. Other initiates share the meat, but set apart being still under the restrictions of junior initiates. A mock fight follows in which the initiates and women take part. Finally before the sun sets, "a married man with his chief wife comes near to their hut and addresses him with the following words":

[340] Each unit seems to be distinguished from the other by its peculiar songs. FOX, l. c., p. 480, states that almost all of these songs are in a "certain cryptic language".

[341] LEAKEY, l. c., p. 208.

[342] LEAKEY was wrongly misled in his information, as also states l. c., p. 196, that "the actual transfer from the senior warrior stage to the elder's stage takes place without any ceremonial", which is not correct.

[343] FOX, l. c., p. 480.

[344] MERKER, l. c., pp. 198 ss.

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SL1 "I say, thou art no longer of moran (a circumcised, a warrior), but of moru (an elder). Take care of thy cattle, goats and sheep, and have regard for them. Give up the occupations of the warriors thou art now an elder".

"After this feast", remarks Merker, "it all depends on the warrior whether he chooses to take a greater or lesser part in raids. Usually he gets married at once and lives with his wife either in his father's kraal or in the warriors' kraal (enegata) until all his age-mates have married. Only then he is recognized as of moru; each one builds his own kraal and lays aside the clothes, decorations and the pigtail of the warriors".

It is evident that the effect of the ceremony is rather limited. It allows an initiate to take a wife, but, even after that, the initiate is not yet "recognized" as an elder. It is as if he were given the elder's status in anticipation of the time when all his age-mates are married. At which time only the status of elder becomes for all purposes official.

SL1 A very detailed description of "the upkeep of milk" is given by J. T. Downes, but the ceremony is mentioned also by other authorities. Fox,[49] states that "the ceremony is performed by each warrior individually",[50] and Downes tells us that it occurs at the village of the initiate's father and that four grown-elders take a special part in it.

The ceremony is preceded by a dance. The candidate is clothed in women's clothes and the first two of the elders place women ear-rings (ornaments) on him.[51]

A test follows, in which the candidate is expected to confess how many times he has "stolen milk", i. e. taken milk by himself or with people other than his age mates. Two heads of cattle are usually paid as a fine by a guilty candidate. He is then solemnly instructed by one of the elders, apparently the most senior, about "what he must and must not do after he has drunk and become an elder". He now drinks the milk, "very little however" as this

[49] Fox, l. c., p. 488.

[50] He says also that "the ceremony usually takes place sometimes a year or two after the E-unoto owing to the Government policy of reducing the period of warriorhood as much as possible".

[51] These ear-rings, ornings, are also worn by elders. For this reason some of our authorities describe the ornings put on by candidates as the elder's ear-rings or decorations. But the whole status of candidate is undoubtedly of a liminal type.

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time. Then the dance is resumed until night. At this stage the initiate is allowed to have intercourse with his wife.

The next morning the initiate, as soon as he rises, again drinks some milk. Then he is smeared all over with a special mixture by two of the elders, who also present him with an olive and a bamboo stick. A procession is then formed from inside the hut, where these ceremonials have been accomplished, to the cattle kraal. Here the elders choose four or eight "(it must be four or eight)" head of the initiate's cattle, and he hits each one of them with his olive stick.

The initiate must now remain inside for five days. On the fourth day his mother pours liquid, half milk and half water, on his head, and then the mother shaves him.[*] The ceremony is now complete.

Fosbrooke,[**] makes reference to a similar ceremony "by which a warrior is permitted to drink the milk from his wife's cattle".[***] He then remarks that "this does not, however, permit him (the initiate) to drink milk by himself; this must always be done with his age-mates until such time as all go through the *ngolwe* ceremony". This indicates that "that *ngolwe of milk*" must also be considered as an individual anticipation of the status officially recognized only at the corporate ceremony.

We do not possess any detailed description of "the *ngolwe of meat*". We are informed by Fox,[****] that the ceremony takes place, and he records it as "the second *el-ngolwe* ceremony, called the *Ol-ngolwe of meat*". After such ceremony the initiate may eat meat freely, and, if he chooses, eat meat which has been touched by a woman. [303]

The *ngolwe* proper is the closing ceremony which finally initiates the age class. It is celebrated by the Kisongo, but unacknowledged and accepted throughout Masailand.[*****] The ceremony is briefly described by Merker,[******] as follows: "when all the members [184]

[*] These formalities may be performed either by the candidates' mother or his first wife, provided the latter had not conceived while he was still uncircumcised, or by the two women together.

[**] Fosbrooke, l. c., p. 96.

[***] The expression "his wife's cattle" sounds inaccurate and misleading. Probably it refers to the initiate's cattle tended by his wife.

[****] Fox, l. c., pp. 409 a.

[*****] Fosbrooke, l. c., p. 96, states that the ceremony "is traditionally held on alternate (to ?) sabuks (the hill of the Sirkon), Upper Sanjan, Kedong".

[******] Merker, l. c., p. 70.

* = circumcision = cat. 1955.

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SL1 of these associations (the age-units) have long been married, the *ol oiboni* (the prophet) binds them more closely by giving a common name to both age-classes [1] each of which, as we have seen, has its own name. This takes place at *ol osho* feast. All the members of the associations come together at the *ol oiboni*'s place and build a great kraal near his village. Everybody brings honey for making beer or an ox for meat. This last is then killed by sufferation at the *en gabata* feast. The feast consists in consuming all these things, and its climax is the proclamation by the *ol oiboni* that from now on all the assembled people shall belong to a single *ol oiji* (age-class), and have a common class name [2].

SL1 SL4 Further, [3] states that " a single official, *ol-loo-nyokya*, is chosen as the head of the whole generation (age-class), thus symbolizing the union of the two ages (age-units) which have up to now been independent, each with its own *laiyoni* or ceremonial leader ".

SL1 It is also this feast that " those who are not yet married do so at the earliest opportunity. Those who are married, if their fathers [171] are still alive, move off from the paternal home (village), for they are now in complete control of their cattle, and if they stayed with their fathers there would be constant bickering on animal husbandry matters. It is also this feast that " pigtails are cut off and are not allowed to grow again, the new elders may drink milk alone, and most that married women have now, carry about short blanket square (*enduro nare*) in place of the long pelisted warriors' square, in fact all the customs of warriorhood are abandoned ". [4] In other words through the *eyakuo* ceremony initiates reach a complete [SL4] social and economic independence and become full men or elders, they may beget children, own their own stock and build their own village or 'gate'.

There is no doubt that the value of the *Eyakuo* proper for the institution of the age-class is equal to that of *Eunkolomi*. This is stated by Paulowitsch. [5] He writes: " Just as the Kakonyoko ceremony of *Eunkolomi* starts off the age (class-period) for the whole tribe (read = the whole Masailand), it appears that the Kimonge *Eyakuo* closes it throughout Masailand ". This value of *Eyakuo*

[1] Read = age-units (my translation).
[2] Fosbrooke, l. c., p. 36.
[3] Fosbrooke, l. c., p. 36.
[4] Fosbrooke, l. c., p. 36.

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is also confirmed by the fact that, as Fox [1] states, " the generation names (i. e. class names) emanate from the Kinungu in Teigamy'ike Territory and are common to all the Kikuyu. They are given soon after the warriors (initiates) of the two combined ages (age-units) have become elders. Therefore the age-names (i. e. age-unit names) tend to fall into disuse and be replaced by the generation names (i. e. class names) ". (Words in brackets mine).

It should be noted here that the acknowledgement of the Kaberyrike *Kwbolomet* and of the Kinungu *Ygukuru* by all the Kikuyu is the more remarkable if one considers the tendency of each territorial section to hold ceremonies of its own for the initiation of the age-units.

X - THE GENERAL PATTERN OF THE INITIATION CEREMONIES

At this point, when all initiation ceremonies have been studied, it may be of interest to note that the ritual patterns of all these ceremonies, whether their value is territorially sectional or extends throughout Kikuyuland, are essentially similar. Initiation ceremonies are made up of four main elements: a) testing and instruction of candidates; b) election of a leader; c) sacrifice of a bull; d) ceremonial fire.

a) The testing and instruction of the candidates is a broad expression which covers various rites performed at different times. It refers to all the ordeals (except circumcision) and confessions which candidates are expected to pass through, and to the instructions, blessings and prayers which the elders impart to, or offer for, their given candidates.

b) Contrary to expectation the office of leader holds no attraction for the candidates. Very probably the reason is that such leaders, or officials, as the *nyomoni* and *ceremi* are expected to act in a fashion which is not the fashion of their own age-mates at that moment. Indeed they are forced to act as elders when their companions are being recognized as junior or senior initiates. There is no detailed account of the election of the class-leader (*ol-lo-ewenga*). If that opposition to office is viewed in the background of the leader's limited and temporary authority in the age system, it may be taken as a further indication that these leaders have nothing in common with political chiefs as found in centralized societies.

[1] Fox, l. c., p. 228.

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c) That the killing of the bull is a religious sacrifice is shown by the fact that the bull is killed in a ceremonial way, i. e. by suffocation.[***] Prayers are also offered to God, and ceremonial blessings from the bull's skin are distributed to all those present.

d) At first sight the ceremonial fire gives the impression of being inconsistent with this ritual pattern. It serves to destroy the bones of the sacrificed bull, and it is also produced at the foundation of the village of the initiates (*manyatta*). The importance of this ritual element, however, becomes evident if we compare it with the so called *piron* relationship. *Piron* is the Swahili word for protecting new fire. The breaking of a similar stick by the *piron*-elders in the main city of *Bukongoro*, and the elders and candidates when they visit the prophet say: " This is our fire-stick, we are one ", [***]

Against the background of the above patterns, individual initiation, in the way it is now performed, i. e. by circumcision, seems to stand apart and follow a pattern of its own. This discord is somewhat striking, and one may be permitted to lament the opinion that circumcision as such is foreign to the age-system of the Masai. Indeed, the structure of the age-system as such has no direct connection with individual initiation.

The Overlapping Rhythm. Discussing the interval between the various ceremonies which institute the age-sets we accepted the period of seven years as a good though vague, approximation. On that basis we may now assume that fifteen years is a parallel approximation of the interval between the institution of two age-classes.

The inaccuracy of any numerical computation with regard to Masai age-system is emphasized by what we call the overlapping rhythm.

Up to this point the age-class has been considered absolutely, i. e. without relation to preceding or succeeding classes. In fact the actual institution of a class is related to other classes, and especially to that class immediately preceding and the one which follows immediately. Similarly one age-unit is related to the unit next above it and the one next below it. Let us consider the phenomenon by focussing attention on the left-hand unit. This is the council of the two units of a class, and the junior of the two. As

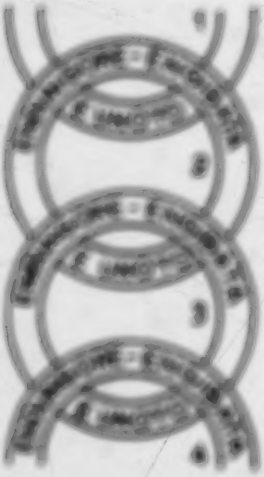
[***] The ordinary way of killing a beast is by stabbing it in the nape of the neck. Cf. Hollis, l. c., pp. 281, 283.

[***] Waronguru, l. c., pp. 148 ss.

soon as the left-hand unit is about to perform *Eunoto*, and thus obtain the privileges of seniority, the candidates of the next class below hold the *Barbaisai* ceremony and a new period of initiation is started. The rhythm of the age system moves on, and the right-hand unit of the new class enters the process of initiation. When the left-hand unit in question becomes senior, the preceding right-hand unit has been senior for a long time, namely since the first initiation ceremonies (*Endungore-Engilata*) of the left-hand unit. Members of both, however, officially become elders at the same time by the performance of *Eunoto*. At this same time the right-hand unit of the next class below is about to hold *Eunoto* and become the senior unit. And so on."[1]

The phenomenon is made clear by the following series of diagrams:

DIAGRAM 1. The overlapping of the age-units.



1 = Left-hand age-unit of the preceding class.

2 = Right-hand age-unit } of a single class

3 = Left-hand age-unit }

4 = Right-hand age-unit of the succeeding class.

[1] Jacobs, l. c., p. 190 uses the names for this phenomenon of overlapping in the military aspect of the age-system. He writes: "as two junior groups (units) may move out into the fifteen stage until there is a unit age-group in the senior stage, an observer in 1950 might mean having a single age-group alone in the senior stage for too long, and this would be a serious thing since only senior groups are the fighting forces of the tribe".

[illegible]

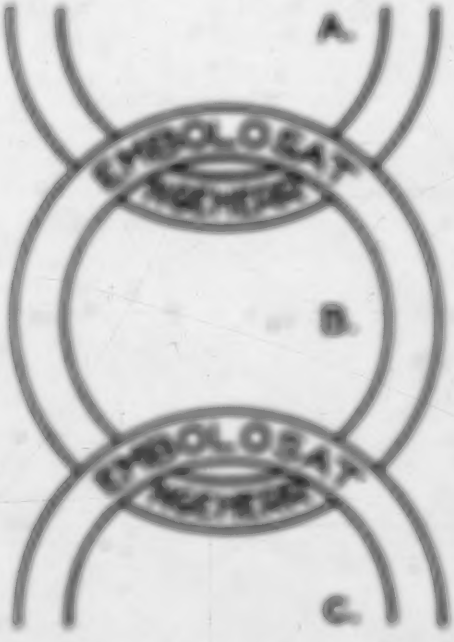
56 DIAGRAM II. A single age-class in itself.

A – age-class

1 – Right-hand unit

2 – Left-hand unit.

DIAGRAM III. The overlapping of the age-classes.



A – the preceding class.

B – a full single class

C – the succeeding class.

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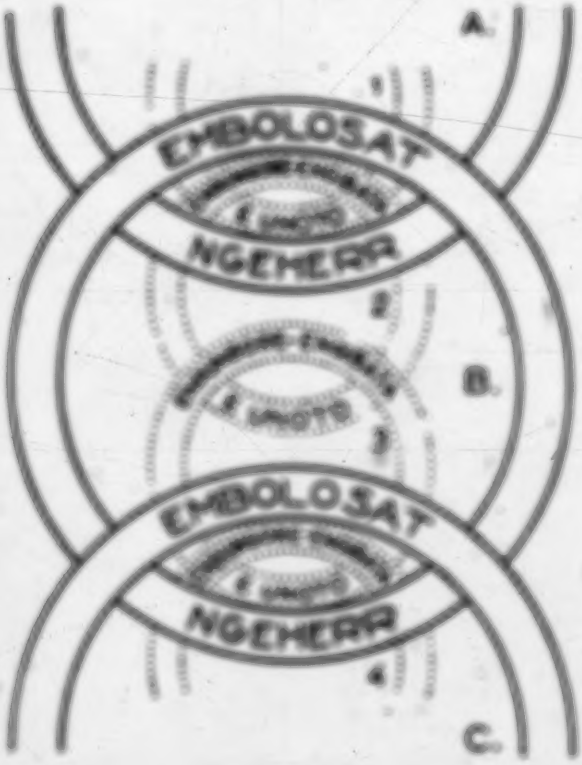
DIAGRAM IV. The overlapping rhythm in the entire complexity. [FL.]



A = the preceding class

1 = left-hand unit of class A

B = a full single class

2 = right-hand unit of class B

3 = left-hand unit of class B

C = the succeeding class

4 = right-hand unit of class C

The Interrelations of Age-Classes. The rhythm of Mossi age-system seems to allow for five contemporary classes. All these classes differ in status and power according to their seniority as well as the efficiency of their individual members. We may thus distinguish between the *junior elders* who are members of the last instituted class; the *senior elders* who are members of the next one above; the *old men* who might further be distinguished for they are the few surviving members of the other three classes above.

The *junior elders* "are mostly concerned with family matters, establishing their own gains, marrying and performing ceremonies to ensure the fertility of their wives."[1] In other words, their

[1] Tauxier, l. c., p. 51.

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immediate interest are in the main of a private nature, and their share in tribal or public affairs is a minor one. They try to enhance their social status by increasing cattle, marrying older wives, and having their sons initiated.

The senior elders have a full share in political life. It would even be correct to say that this is their privilege, and theirs is the class in power. Their sons are ready for initiation. Therefore it is upon their class that falls the duty of undertaking the institution of a new class by controlling and performing all the proper ceremonies. It is from such duty or privilege that the so-called grove relationship is derived. It is a mutual relationship by which, on the one hand, the elders pledge themselves to assist the candidates, and be their sponsors, and, on the other hand, the latter revere the elders' authority and follow their advices. Thus the grove-elders control the main branch of social and political activity, namely the institution of a new class. And, because the initiates, both junior and senior, constitute the strongest body of the military force over the other branch of political structure, namely military organization and activity, fails to some extent under the elders' authority. The peculiar nature of Maasai society makes it out of place the search for individual political leaders, but if we want to express ourselves with usual terms, we could say that the grove-elders are the true political leaders of the Maasai.

The three classes of the old men are the classes which have retired. In practice they take no further active part in political life, but are concerned with religious ceremonies in which their presence is greatly considered. Their number is naturally decreasing and the few survivors of the last classes are generally dotards. When possible, these survivors, particularly the former leaders, are consulted when tradition is to be ascertained.

Analysis shows that the prerogatives of the age-classes are common and proper to all their members, and it shows also that the number of class-members, after the class is constituted, is so closed as no member is any longer accepted into the class.

Junior elders succeed seniors in political leadership when the institution of a new class is officially opened. The phenomenon takes place through the rhythm of the age-system succession.

In this connection Fosbrooke,[10] speaks of a handing over ceremony performed by the senior and junior elders. "The mat-

[10] Fosbrooke, l. c., p. 56.

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ter ", he writes, " is by no means clear, but there exist vestiges of a ceremony now practised in conjunction with fertility rites, etc., whereby the senior elders retire and hand over the government to the junior elders ". Unfortunately, no details of such " vestiges " are indicated, nor is a similar ceremony mentioned by any other authority.

In 1909 Pommerol compiled a census of the class and sub-sections among some of the Kisongo. Above we reproduced the membership figures of the age units; it is now of interest to give the figures of the same census for the age-classes.

	PLACES	Kibaya	Samunyai	Engare-nanyuki	Longido	Total	
Class	[illegible]	1	-	-	-	1	Old men
	[illegible]	3	1	-	1	4	
	[illegible]	14	13	9	50	87	
	[illegible]	80	80	80	80	120	Senior Elders
	[illegible]	40	40	30	40	150	Junior Elders
	TOTALS	180	180	69	110	480	

The above totals should be compared with the total of the age-unit numbers, which are as follows:

	TOTALS	120	120	80	150	510	Initiates

A special officer is elected at the ngokuny. He is called *olaiserwapa*.[1] His functions are not very clear. He is described by Pommerol,[2] as having " no duty ", though he is held in great

[1] The name refers evidently to the elder's functions. The *serwapa* are the marriage prayer of the elders.
[2] Pommerol, *l. c.*, p. 40.

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request by all his age-mates. It appears that there is only one such officer for the whole clan as there is a single performance of the spoken prayer.

II - THE PROPHET AND THE INITIATION OF THE AGE-CLASS

"There can be little doubt", writes FOSBROOKE,[179] "that at this time (i. e., in pre-European times) a *laibon's* chief functions were: i. *dispensing charms for rain*; ii. *supervising and blessing the age grade ceremonies*; iii. *propounding the ritual and giving charms for local ceremonies, concerned with fertility and disease (both human and bovine) and with rainfall*".

He also remarks,[180] that "although the supervision of the age-grade ceremonies has been recorded as an important function of the *laibon*, this activity is subject to various restrictions, the principle of which I have been unable to ascertain".

It seems to me, on the basis of the foregoing analysis, that the function of the prophet in connection with the institution of the age-sets and the age-class is marginal and secondary to the authority of the *piron*-elders, and that it possesses a wholly ritual value. The authority of the prophet does not find a proper place in the structure of Masai age-system. This system is the principle which restricts his activity.

Whenever one of the initiation ceremonies is held, a delegation of the *piron*, both elders and candidates, approaches one of the prophets for his blessing. According to FOSBROOKE's information it does not matter whether the sought prophet is a prophet of the territorial section where the ceremony is performed or of another section or even an "unofficial" *laibon*.[181] The same cer-

[179] FOSBROOKE, l. c., p. 18.
[180] FOSBROOKE, l. c., p. 17.
[181] FOSBROOKE, l. c., p. 17. The passage continues as follows: "For instance the *Purkori* or passing out ceremony of the *Dareto* age-set (class) of the Kisongo section was certainly held under Parit, and the *Dareto* or promotion ceremony of the *Kimaio* age (age-set) under Mbatyo, who were respectively the ruling *laibon* at the material times. But at last an old Kibiyo adopter of the Ingidong clan, one Lolkokwa ole Kankonga (now deceased) was called to assist in both these ceremonies. By agreement the Mondul *laibon* received the fees in respect of these ceremonies from the Baraguya and Kibiyo sections, whilst those contributed by the Mondul and Longido Masai went to Lolkokwa at Ilali, Kenya Colony. In another case, Sangayan, *laibon* of the *Kimaio* age for the Matapato and Loitokitok sections, which are normally under Kimaniai".

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tact with a prophet is established before a raid. All these delegations are expected to pay the prophet a number of cattle contributed by the age-set's members they represent. The responsibility for collections of this kind is one of the main duties of the leaders.[179]

The authority and the influence of the prophet do not extend beyond these contacts. The elders alone are responsible for the organization of the initiation ceremonies and hence for the institution of the age-class.

However, in his description of the *laibon* FOSBROOKE assumes too much. He writes,[180] " On evidence which need not be recorded here, it seems certain that the Masai, whose age grade custom so closely approaches that of the Galla, were possessed of their present military organization prior to leaving their original home.[181] Thus it appears that the *laibon* is a later adaptation imposed on a self-sufficient organization of government through age-grades. Probably much of the confusion of function which exists today, the indefinite division of governmental authority between the *laibon* and the age-set leaders, is due to the adoption of an institution (namely, the *laibon* hood, B. B.) incompatible with the original culture. It would be wrong to regard the institution as being foreign to Masai nature, but it is probably true that it is a feature which had not found its true level in the tribal structure when European influence intervened ".

The assumption that the Masai age-system is related to the Galla age-system is frequently taken for granted but up to the present, nothing definite has been ascertained on this point.[182] On the basis of our present analysis we agree with FOSBROOKE's conclusion on the secondary character of the prophet's function in the institution of the age-class.[183] But we find it difficult to agree with him when he states that " the age grades " have been the channel through which the *laibon* institution came to be established as an

[179] It frequently happens, remarks FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, p. 10, that the contributor does not know exactly the reason for his contribution. Of course he relies entirely on his leader.

[180] FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, p. 12.

[181] FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, p. 2, " lying between Lake Rudolf and Kenya Highlands ".

[182] On this point, see BERNARDI, *l. c.*, p. 314, fn. 2.

[183] FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, p. 10: " But he (the prophet) is not responsible for the organization of such matters (i. e. *Eunkolosi*, *Uasin* and *Nyakeri* ceremonies) nor is it on his initiative that new age commence or hold ones stand down ".

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56 79 [114] institution of Masai culture. We are much inclined to think on different lines. The office of the prophet is essentially a ritual office. His true power derives from his ritual value. It seems evident from the preceding analysis that Masai political and social structure is primarily based on the age-system. We think that it is solely for this system that the *laiboni* did not entirely succeed in invading the political field and usurping the authority of the elders.

That the function of the prophet is essentially foreign to the age system is a fact which the present analysis may also have helped to make evident. The conclusion arrived at by FOSBROOKE on "the [114] incompatibility" of the *laiboni* institution "with the original culture" of the Masai is one that could only be properly reached after an historical and critical study of Masai ritual and religious institutions and not merely from a survey of their political and social institutions.

XII – THE RELATIONSHIP OF CLASS-MEMBERS [126]

561 574 A strong bond of solidarity is felt by all members of a class. Such feeling is primarily due, as is natural, to the mere fact of belonging to the same social body. Other factors, such as a more or less equal age and the contemporaneous performance of essential initiation ceremonies give substantial cause for a feeling and bond of that kind. That such a bond is strong and effective is clearly shown by Masai hospitality customs. They show also what force of cohesion springs from the age-system structure. Any class-member has a right to stay and live at the house of any of his age-mates. While he is a stranger to the place, he is not a stranger to his age-mate for they are members of the same class. The latter cannot refuse him, otherwise he would be cursed by his own class. This [126] cursing power of the age-class is very significant to our present purpose. It shows the authority and power possessed by the class for keeping its structural cohesion and for defending itself from any disruptive attack. [127]

[126] MERKER, *l. c.*, p. 67; HOLLIS, *l. c.*, p. 280; FOX, *l. c.*, p. 183.

[127] Masai hospitality customs are best described by HOLLIS, *l. c.*, pp. 287 s. Translating, as he does, direct Masai accounts, he writes: "When a Masai goes to other kraals to pay a visit, he does not on his arrival enter a hut unless he knows the owner, for if he belongs, for instance, to the *Aimer* age, he must not enter the hut of one of the *Kishumu* age, as he does not belong to this age. He will ask where the huts of the members of the *Aimer* age are, and when he

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It is possible to consider that solidarity as a kind of class identity. This identity does not exclude the possible variations and differentiations of class-members arising from individual differentiations of talents and character, from leadership, seniority and social prestige attached to the possession of a great number of wives and a large herd of cattle. The main expressions of that identity are the use of a single name for the whole class and some special marriage regulations which apply to class members and, to some extent, to their children.

Thus, a man may not marry the daughter of a member of his own class. If he fornicates with her he is punished by his own age-mates. " His kraal is destroyed, he is severely beaten, and a number of his oxen are slaughtered ". Similarly, " if a warrior or lay commits adultery with a wife of a man belonging to his father's age-grade (or class), he is solemnly cursed by the members of that age-grade ". (HOLLIS). Furthermore, any class member when a guest of any of his age-mates, has a right to cohabit with his host's wife. MERKER, says that a widow " must not re-marry but she must live with the members of her deceased husband's class ". This " sexual communism ", as HOLLIS calls it, takes place only among members of the same class. It is limited, of course, by clan and kinship exogamy, which, even for class members, is strictly enforced.

At the performance of the *Emboloosat*, *Eopikata*, *Unoto*, *Ngokorr* names are given to sets instituted. Names assumed at the *Emboloosat*, *Eopikata*, and *Unoto* are temporary, for temporary is the nature of the set thus established. At the *Ngokorr*-people all previous names are discarded for a single name which is final and applies to the age-class as a whole. It is this name which is handed down to the following generations. Age-class names are, so it were, the milestones by which Masai can order their past into a certain historical perspective. Class names are thus recalled when historical facts are recounted.

Lists of class-names have been recorded by our authorities. It may be of interest to reproduce here some of those lists collected by MERKER, FOX, and FOSBROOKE.[1] FOSBROOKE has attempted

has been shown them, he will enter one. When he has entered, the owner of the hut leaves him and goes to search for a place to sleep in.... A Masai cannot refuse hospitality to a stranger (of his own age) for he is afraid that the other members of his age will curse him, and he will die ".

[1] MERKER, *l. c.*, p. 300; FOX, *l. c.*, pp. 480, 482; FOSBROOKE, *l. c.*, pp. 11 s.

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a concordance of class-names with dates and some known historical facts.[***] At this stage there is no need to indicate how the very precise 14 years interval is misleading: dates must be taken as a vague attempt to a correct translation of Maasai age-system inner system.[***]

	MERKER (1904)	FOX (1930)	FOSBROOKE (1956)		
1	-	Il Sindeyo	-		
2	-	Il Sukumbi	-		
3	Il Dingi	Il Tingi	Dingi	1760	Members of this class are to remembered by living elders.
4	Il Kimereni	-	Kimereni	1781	
5	Il Merishari	I Merishare	Merishari	1808	
6	Il Kidotu	Il Kidotu	Kidotu	1831	
7	Il Dwati	Il Twati	Dwati	1856	
8	Il Nyangusi	Il Nyangusi	Nyangusi	1881	– One or two members still alive.
9	'l Aiser	Il Aiser	Laiser	1900	
10	-	Il Taiola	Oiniki	1931	– Famine, hindergut and smallpox.
11	-	Il Twati	Dwati	1956	– First contact with Europeans.
12	-	Il Tareto	Oiretto	1911	– The great war.
			Kimila	1936	– Right-hand unit.
			Merishe	1932	– Left-hand unit.

[14] *** Figures of years are described by Fosbrooke as the "approximate date of circumcision. The expression is very vague and shows how inaccurate the usual terminology is. Following our analysis it seems clear that "circumcision" means here "age-class", and, therefore, dates may be referred to either the performance of *Eunoto* or the performance of the *Ilpukori* proper.

[14] *** A fourth list recorded by Huntz, l. c., p. 366, is not reproduced here because it is evident from a comparison with the other lists that it contains "an indeterminate mixture of age (unit) and class-names" (Fox).

[For material on the "il-oshom" ("ol-osho," singular), which may be either a tribal unit or a strictly political territorial unit or even both (discrepancy in the literature between sources # 9 and 12) see also category 616.]

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[The "Black Cattle" and "Red Bulls" have previously been referred to as sub-clans (see 1: Hollis, this file); therefore all data in this source pertinent to these groups will be found in category 616, even though Bernardi refers to them as moieties.]

[For the dynamics of political power, including the mechanics of political leadership and decision making activities in the group, see category 161. The age-set system is the key to the understanding of the political structure and behavior of the pastoral Masai.]

[For description of the moran (warrior) societies (called eirite), which form the standing army of the Masai, including their recruitment and training, see category 546.]

[For ceremonies that initiate the Masai youth into the status of both legal majority and adulthood see category 561.]